CAN WE BELIEVE ?

Frank M. Goodchild

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
APR 8 - 1927
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BT 1101 .G66 1926
Goodchild, Frank M. 1860-
1928.
Can we believe?

CAN WE BELIEVE?

Popular Discussions of Fundamental Christian Truths

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
APR 8 - 1927
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

By
FRANK M. GOODCHILD, D.D.



NEW YORK CHICAGO
Fleming H. Revell Company
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

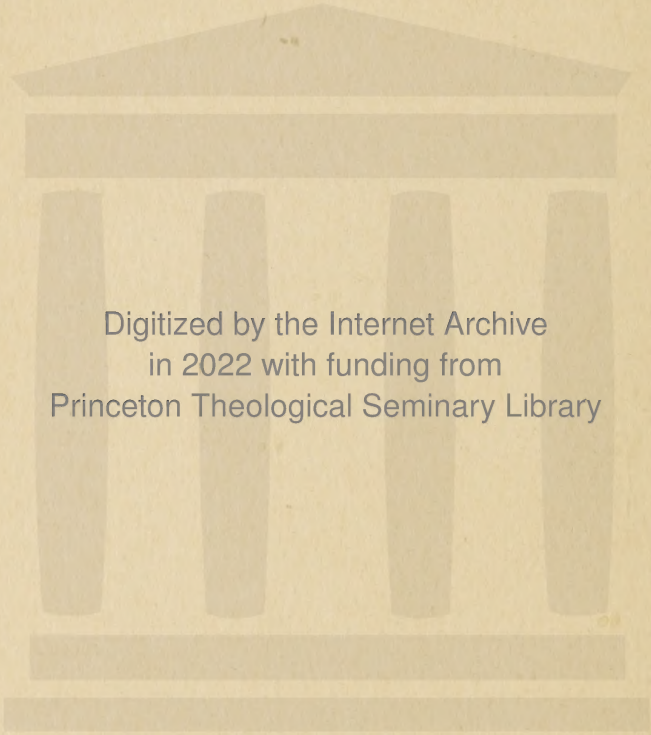
Copyright, MCMXXVI, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 17 North Wabash Ave.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 99 George Street

To My Son

FRANKLIN MYERS GOODCHILD, M. D.

who throughout his scientific training and in the practice of a learned profession has retained his simple faith in the religion taught in the Bible


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

https://archive.org/details/canwebelievepopu00good_0

FOREWORD

THE chapters of this book were in substance first delivered as sermons in the Central Baptist Church of New York City, where the author was pastor for nearly thirty years, and they have been given as addresses at Winona and other Bible Conferences. They still retain the style of spoken words. Whenever they have been delivered, they have proved so helpful to faith, that many people have asked for their publication. In response to these requests the book appears. By deliberate intention the treatment of the subjects is popular, and the appeal is made to the average thoughtful reader, but it is hoped that the arguments will bear the scrutiny of the most exacting.

F. M. G.

New York.

CONTENTS

I

THE IMPORTANCE OF BELIEF

The New Testament emphasizes belief—Important in business, in national life, in the home, and in religion—Loss of faith most serious of all losses—Always some who sneer at faith, but everybody has a creed—Early Church required statement of faith—Definite creed essential to right life—Decline of strong convictions to-day—Convictionless people not agreeable companions—Definite convictions of truth essential to church fellowship—The contention that definite faith is unimportant and good works all important denied—Social service cannot take the place of faith—New Testament insists that belief is of primary importance—Martin Luther and Ernst Renan contrasted—Positive faith essential to a preacher—Intense faith made the great missionaries—Paul a man of faith—No other sort could do his work..... 11

II

CAN WE BELIEVE IN GOD?

To think of God does not make one talkative—Reverence of Mohammedans for the name of God—Sir Isaac Newton—Robert Boyle—Greatness of the subject makes preachers hesitate to preach upon it—But men of the world are discussing it—Bible assumes that men believe in God—It gives men right views of God and tells men how they may come into right relations with God—Bible intimates that belief in God is not so much a matter of piety as of common sense, and urges men to use their reason to discern Him—Incident of Napoleon—The Arab—All nature reveals God—Folly of atheism—Æsthetic sensibilities, moral convictions, and ideals of beauty and goodness argue His existence—What we think of God shapes all our other thinking—The value of a religion is tested by the view it takes of God—Folly of professing to know all about God—Every man paints his own picture of God—Child's view of God—In Jesus Christ God has given us a picture of Himself—God transcends all our thought of Him—To be certain of God is the only source of peace of mind—God still is sovereign—He rules in righteousness—Deals out justice—Hates sin—It is a real gospel that God is for the good man and will lift him up, and He is against the bad man and will throw him down... 26

III

CAN WE BELIEVE IN THE BIBLE?

Accept the Bible unmutilated—Any subtraction from the Bible would be a mutilation of it—No fear of criticism—Conviction unshakeable that it is God's book and He can take care of it—Bible invites criticism—The higher the claim a book makes for itself the more searching our scrutiny of it should be—There is another way of knowing the Bible than by a critical study of the text, or a study of its sources—By illumination of the Holy Spirit—Very plain men may know the mysteries of the kingdom—The unity of the Bible a proof of its divine origin—It is one in its effects, its structure, and in the personality it presents—Different from other books—Every part of it has been the means of turning men from sin—Adapted to all races, every age, and class—Singularly uniform character of its books—Great diversity of authorship, yet intensely harmonious in character—Fifteen hundred years in writing, yet principles unchanged—A unity unparalleled—Illustration of symphony orchestra—Of construction of a church—Unity of Bible more remarkable in that it contradicts the notions of lands where it was written—Pentateuch and the Egyptians—Our Lord's testimony to the unity of the Old Testament—The purpose of the New Testament we do not need to demonstrate—Unity of the Bible mysterious—Cannot add to it or take from it without harm—A unit in its purpose, its structure, and in its saving effect on those who read it—Because back of its many writers is the one living God..... 42

IV

CAN WE BELIEVE IN THE VIRGIN BIRTH?

Wonders attending Christ's birth—Only as you lower your conception of the character of Jesus Christ can you feel that the story should in any way be modified—Some men in every age have considered Christ only a man—When evidence overwhelmingly favours His deity they reject it—Even seek to destroy the evidence—For many centuries the Church has recited its faith in the Virgin Birth—But no doctrine has been more virulently and persistently attacked—Though its historic foundations are secure, the doctrine is attacked to-day by Christian teachers and preachers—Schrempf in Germany—The Virgin Birth cannot be separated from the other wonders of Christ's life—Stand or fall together—Many unscholarly judgments—The true method of science is to find the facts and then construct a theory—Dr. Charles E. Jefferson on the use of the scissors in critical study of

Bible—What facts support belief in the Virgin Birth—Testimony of Mary given by Luke—That of Joseph given by Matthew—Credibility of those Gospels—Alleged silence of Mark, John, and Paul—Unanimity of manuscripts—Alleged parallel between Christ's birth, and that of Greek and Roman heroes—Argument from prophecy in Isaiah and in Genesis—Best proof of credibility of story of Virgin Birth of Christ is the wonderful life He lived—Is acceptance of doctrine important?—Bearing on credibility of New Testament—Rejection of doctrine associated with low conception of the character of Christ—Value of doctrine in daily life..... 61

V

CAN WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD?

What we think of Jesus Christ is fundamental to all our life—Never such deep interest in the person of Christ as to-day—Hall Caine, Prof. Benjamin Jowett, Prof. Adolf Harnack—Man who feels no interest in Jesus Christ has lagged behind thinking men—In New Testament times only two opinions about Jesus—So all through history—Great difference between men—When Christ appears all others are on the same level—What Jesus Christ said of Himself—Set Himself above Bible, above the Sabbath—Claimed the prerogatives of God—Jews rightly charged Him with making Himself equal with God—If His claims were not true, He was a liar and an impostor—Cannot stop with simple admiration of Christ as purest, wisest and best of men—Either more than that or less—Richard Fuller's statement—Richard Watson Gilder's tribute—Testimony of those who stood nearest to Him—Whole course of history has proved His claims—Sects that reject the deity of Christ do not grow—Schism in Congregationalist churches a hundred years ago—Many who have rejected Christ's claims have later acknowledged them—David Friedrich Strauss, William Lecky, Ernst Renan—Whole world is recognizing that Jesus is without a peer—Validity of His claims is still being demonstrated—Most conclusive evidence of Christ's deity is in the renewal of one's own heart—Unanimous testimony of creatures that came under His power..... 79

VI

CAN WE BELIEVE IN THE MIRACLES?

Century ago miracles held a different place in Christian thought from what they hold to-day—Paley's testimony—To-day men depreciate the miracles—But they are given to us on same testimony as other parts of Christ's life—Cut them out of the Gospels and there is little left—The New

Testament writers evidently felt that Christ's miracles made an impression in His favour—What Nicodemus said—Peter's appeal at Pentecost—Jesus Christ felt that His miracles were convincing—Must take New Testament as we find it—Not until third century any serious denial of Christ's miraculous power—Cannot assume attitude of indifference towards miracles—Reasons why miracles have fallen into disrepute —Many spurious miracles—But these are very different from Christ's miracles—Felt to-day that miracles are an interruption of the orderly processes of nature—Fichte's statement of the problem—Henry Mansel's answer—Man's will and its control of natural forces—Seen in the garden—Auberlen, Huxley, Rousseau quoted—New Testament and science not in conflict as to miracles—True science is modest to-day—The mistakes of Comte and Laplace—Wonders of the X-ray—Nobody will venture to say what is possible or impossible—Hume on miracles—Mill's answer to him—Huxley—Flammarion—Jesus was so great in character that great things were natural to Him—Zerah Colburn mathematical genius—Blind Tom musical genius—Culmination of miracles in resurrection of Christ—Admit it and it carries all the rest—Some things cannot be explained except by miracle—Origin of life in the world, conscience, conversion—Instance of Rowdy Brown..... 94

VII

CAN WE BELIEVE IN THE ATONEMENT?

Paul on the heart of the Gospel—His teaching is uniform—Only one gospel in the New Testament—Example of apostles is good one to follow—Nothing else worth preaching—Some fell away from preaching the cross even in Paul's day—Another falling away in days of Moderatism in Scotland—In New England Unitarianism—Same trial is on us again—Evidence in recent hymnals—Other ways of salvation suggested—That Jesus Christ saves us by teaching us the truth—In that case He is not the only Saviour—Men were not dying for teachers when Christ came—Even His special message is well taught in the Old Testament—Others pointed out the way of life—Moses—Prophets and apostles—Paul outdid Him in extent of work of teaching—None of them is presented on that account as a saviour—Suggested that Christ saves us by showing us how to live the truth—He is our example—Such an one is in a sense a saviour—Is that the gospel men need?—We are not simply in danger of falling, but already fallen—Need some one to lift us out of the pit into which we have fallen—Follow His example to be sure, but when we have done our best see more clearly that only hope is in mercy of God the Father, and

the sacrifice of God the Son—New Testament way of salvation is by atoning blood—God's way of salvation must exclude none—To every creature—How Dr. Charles Berry learned what sort of a salvation men need—New Gospels are not comparable with the old..... 108

VIII

CAN WE BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST?

Willing to rest all Christian faith on the single fact of Christ's resurrection—Huxley warned Christian people against that—But New Testament does it—In every age some have found the resurrection incredible—Why?—Resurrection means not simply that life continues after death, but that dead body became alive again—A Christ who died and never came out of the grave is not the Christ of the New Testament—Not the Christ whom the Church has believed in for nineteen hundred years—Men contend that no amount of evidence is sufficient to prove the resurrection of Christ—But the question is not a complex one—Two questions require answer—Did Jesus Christ die? Was Jesus Christ afterwards alive?—We often have to prove death—Proof of the death of Christ is complete—No deception possible—Died in public—By violence—At hands of professional executioners—Attested by spear thrust—Proof that Jesus Christ came back to life equally conclusive—Testimony of friends, enemies, and doubters—What made sudden change in apostles' demeanour?—Christianity could not come out of the grave in which Jesus remained dead—If Jesus Christ remained dead, His cause was dead—Can explain human history only by believing in resurrection of Christ—No fact better established—Can get rid of it only by throwing laws of evidence to the winds—Only one other question—Was the person seen alive assuredly the one who had died?—Identification of persons not a difficult matter—Personal experiences—If identification was a difficult matter transaction of business might be impossible, and procedure of courts difficult—Objection to use of New Testament testimony considered—There is none better—Resurrection of Christ is better attested than poisoning of Socrates or the assassination of Julius Cæsar—Happy consequences of resurrection of Christ..... 123

IX

CAN WE BELIEVE IN A FUTURE LIFE?

When Lazarus was raised from the dead his sisters' chief thought was one of joy that they had him back—But on such a resurrection one might construct a whole philosophy of life—If one could witness a resurrection he would have

no fear of death any more—Would see that the horrors of death had no more reality than stories of bogies—So disciples felt after Christ arose—Most people feel no interest in future life—May be so with people who have suffered no bereavement—Lack of interest in foreign lands when we have no friend there—Woman whose son goes to China has interest in that land aroused—Life here very monotonous unless one has an outlook beyond the grave—Contest of nations for outlet to the sea—Christianity gives an outlook that makes life here larger and better—Life here and hereafter are one—God means us to cherish a hope of a future life and intends to satisfy it—John Fiske on "The Destiny of Man"—Scientific men are more ready than ever before to admit that there may be another life—John Stuart Mill—Huxley—Sir Oliver Lodge—F. W. H. Myers—But we need the assurance of a revelation—Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light—Hope of future life transforms life here—From time to time God has given His people a glimpse into the world beyond—Ezekiel—Apostle John—Bunyan—Human life hopeless without that vision of the future..... 135

X

CAN WE BELIEVE IN FUTURE PUNISHMENT?

The character of the life after death is of prime importance—If life here affects the hereafter we should order our lives accordingly—Think more about future penalties than rewards—No other part of Christian teaching more misunderstood than that about future punishment—Time was when future punishment was over-emphasized in preaching—Jonathan Edwards—To-day it is almost ignored—Dr. R. W. Dale's lament that nobody is afraid of God now—No need to be ashamed of doctrine of future punishment—Bible teaches it clearly—Facts of life demand it—Incident given by Dr. A. H. Strong—Other incidents show sense of justice in criminals demands punishment—No part of Christian teaching has had such reinforcement from science as future punishment—Clearest teaching about it is in words of Jesus Christ—Teaching of the Old Testament—The most terrible things about future punishment of the wicked were said by Christ—Question of literal fire—Christ teaches that punishment for unforgiven sin is certain; just; not arbitrary—Death does not change one's character—Whatever character we have here we have hereafter—Hell not so much a place as a condition—Is sin punished in this world?—Wrong conditions here will be righted hereafter—What is the proportion of the saved and the lost?—What about the heathen and those who never have heard of Christ?—How long will the penalty last?..... 146

XI

CAN WE BELIEVE IN OUR LORD'S RETURN TO THE EARTH?

Greatest day in past history was the day of Christ's first advent; greatest day of future will be the day of His second advent—Frequent mention of the second coming in the New Testament demonstrates its importance—Prevalent dislike of the doctrine—Attitude of Christian people of New Testament times—Dominant thought then—What was so cherished by New Testament Christians ought not be ignored to-day—Thought of His return was very dear to Jesus Christ—Some have tried to explain it away—Some have declared that it already has come to pass—Dr. W. N. Clarke —Mrs. Eddy—Pastor Russell—Some have said that the Lord's return means death—Peter foretold these days of unbelief—Christ sought to keep His people in mind of His return—Associated it with the Lord's Supper—New Testament says clearly that Christ will return in person—Visibly —Suddenly—Must world first be converted?—He will come gloriously—Time of coming not revealed—Fact of return put beyond all dispute—The promise that Christ will return is very satisfying to all our instincts—Career of our Lord in this world is not yet complete—What is the use of this doctrine?—Impels to activity—Sometimes has opposite effect—Meant to comfort and inspire—Great leaders of the Church have cherished the doctrine of Christ's return—Martin Luther—John Calvin—John Knox—The Wesleys—Richard Baxter—Exhortation to watch—Christian people eager for Christ's return—Why He delays..... 160

XII

THE ALMIGHTINESS OF FAITH

Jesus Christ attributes to faith almost incredible power—His frequent assurances of it are impressive—Often find the meaning of a proposition by putting it to a practical test—Afraid to so test the text about mountain-moving faith—Wish people would use Bible naturally—Faith as a grain of mustard seed—Allusion is to size of seed—Meant to imply almightiness of even a little faith—Can do impossibilities—Mountains always used in a figurative sense—Jews spoke of mighty men as mountain movers—Would have spoken so of Roosevelt, of Marshall Foch, of Napoleon —Some things impossible even to God—Dr. H. G. Weston's statement—Common sense needed in interpreting Scripture —Mirabeau and Pitt on impossibilities—Primitive Christianity a religion of power—Early Christians sensationalists —Ought not be satisfied unless the Church is now impress-

ing the world—Did so at Pentecost—In Protestant Reformation—Great Awakening—In Finney's and Moody's revival—Demonstrations of power by Church ought not to be unusual—Church cannot live on past history—If Church lacks power the world rightly ignores her—Church like her Lord is supernatural—Each Christian should have ideal of mighty faith and fervent devotion for his own church—Is Church's power declining?—The might of faith demonstrated in Wesleyan revival and in the rise of the modern missionary movement at the haystack in Williamstown..... 176

I

THE IMPORTANCE OF BELIEF

"This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."—JOHN 6:29.

ON every page of the New Testament tremendous emphasis is laid upon the importance of belief. It is the only way by which we come into vital relation with Jesus Christ. John says that Christ "gave power to become sons of God to them that believed on his name." Belief is the invariable condition of receiving forgiveness of one's sins. The Lord Jesus always asked for belief as a prerequisite for bestowing the benefits that came through His power to work miracles. Without belief in Him one is impotent; with belief one is omnipotent. "All things are possible to him that believeth." Everywhere the Bible indicates that not only all power is dependent on our believing but all peace of mind as well. Near the end of the epistle to the Romans Paul says: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." Without confident belief there is no such thing as buoyancy of spirit or serenity of mind.

It is so even in the ordinary concerns of life. Some things a man must be absolutely sure of if he is to have any peace or happiness. In business a man must feel sure of the integrity of the people to whom he sells goods if he is to rest at night. To promote that necessary feeling of confidence all sorts of devices are made—from the companies that make it their business to know the

reliability of all tradesmen and furnish you information about them, to the companies that insure you against loss through uncollectable bills. Just as soon as confidence fails in the business world, panic comes, and indescribable disaster, and the only cure for such a condition is a restoration of confidence.

If you are not sure of the strength of the government that guarantees the banknotes you have in your purse your money becomes almost worthless, and you can buy a bushel of its notes for a few cents. During the World War, German marks which normally would be worth about twenty-five cents apiece, were worth so little that you had to use a microscope to discover any value at all in them. Only as men are confident of the stability and strength of a government, will the notes which that government issues be of sufficient value to be used in legitimate business.

You know how essential a thing confidence is in the home. Husband and wife must feel no uncertainty about each other's faithfulness and devotion. Cæsar's wife must even be above suspicion. As soon as the slightest degree of uncertainty about each other creeps in, the home is in turmoil, and there is unhappiness and coldness and estrangement, with all the tragedy which that means for many hearts. The couple may be true to each other in every respect. Each may be conscious of purity and rectitude unimpaired. Each may mourn over the loss of the other's affection. Everything in the world may be exactly right in their relations with each other. But if any suspicion that things are not right thrusts itself into their minds, the home is ruined. You must not only have things right but you must feel sure that they are right or else you are distracted in mind, and distressed in heart.

Of course a man must have some assurance of the truth of things on which he rests the hopes of his soul or he will know nothing of the peace that is promised to Christian people. Yet it must be admitted that it is the very things on which we have been resting our souls that are called in question to-day. The attacks on Christian truth that have been made from Christian pulpits recently and in our theological seminaries, and which have aroused such profound public interest are not attacks on non-essentials. They are attacks on the very foundations of our faith. And though the men who have made these attacks declare they still hold their Christian faith, what they have said has without doubt resulted in the loss of faith to many another. And a great loss that is, the loss of faith. There is no other loss that one can suffer half so bad as that.

Loss of fortune, that is a dreadful thing. Loss of health, that is very sad. Loss of reputation, that is calamitous. Loss of friends, that is sometimes heartbreaking. But to lose one's faith is worse than all these other losses put together. Better have all your money slip away from you so that you have not a dollar to your name than to lose your faith. Better lose your place in the business world so that you have to grub along in hardship from day to day, than to lose your faith. Better have your last friend turn his back on you and feel yourself alone in an unfriendly world, than to lose your faith. Better have your health utterly break down so that you linger along from day to day in a sort of living death, than to lose your faith. There is no other loss that for a moment compares with this. Loss of faith is a loss unspeakable.

In every age and in every land there have been some unhappy souls who have sneered at faith. Some people

have an insane hatred of creeds. Such people we have in plenty to-day. They act as though it is a crime to have a creed. But we make a tremendous mistake if we underestimate the value of creeds. Every one but a fool has a creed. We have creeds about everything. We have a business creed. You could not manage your office if you had not. You have a medical creed, and so when you are sick you send for a physician of your own school, allopathic, homeopathic, hydropathic, or what not. There are creeds of art and science. And there are also very rightly religious creeds. What folly it is to say that religion, the most important concern of life, is the only thing on which one should not have a definite belief, or if he has such a belief, should not say what it is.

The early Church required each applicant for membership to make some statement of his faith. Baptism was administered only on profession of faith. The eunuch, whom Philip met seemingly by chance in the wilderness, asked for baptism and Philip said at once, "If thou believest." And the eunuch responded at once, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." The Church itself had clear convictions that bound the members together, and naturally enough in admitting new members they wished them to believe the same things and to be devoted to the same ends. If you join a masonic lodge you are expected to assent to its principles. That is fair. You are expected to give assurances of your loyalty. That is right. You do not go into a masonic lodge with the intention of changing everything. Masons value the ancient landmarks, and seek to preserve them. That is true of every organization that I know anything about. You cannot be admitted to membership in any of them unless you come prepared to agree to its principles and abide by its rules. The Church is the only institution I

know of in which men claim the right to membership while they repudiate its foundation principles and seek to bring about its overthrow. Christian schools are the only ones of which I have any knowledge in which men claim the right to teach things that are subversive of the school's existence. It is not according to reason that it should be so. The early Church was entirely right when it required a clear profession of one's faith of every person who wished to enter its fellowship.

I confess that I have little use for those people who are always saying that it makes no difference what a man believes if he only lives aright. Such a statement could be made only by one who is slovenly in his thinking or careless in his speech, or else by a man who is bewildered. For a man cannot possibly live aright unless in certain essential things he believes aright. A man's creed is to him what a tail is to a bird. A bird's tail is given to it to balance itself with and to steer itself with. If a bird has no tail it totters when it tries to stand still, and it cannot go straight when it is on the wing. So a man is wobbly, he is unsteady in his thinking and crooked in his life, unless he is held to truth and righteousness by certain definite beliefs that are dearer to him than life itself.

We are living in an age when strength of conviction has declined. Men everywhere are showing themselves disciples of Lord Bacon. When Lord Bacon, who has been lauded by many as having had the mightiest intellect of the human race, was asked how he was able to retain office under two such different sovereigns as Queen Elizabeth and James I, he is said to have replied: "By imitating the willow instead of the oak." There are multitudes of people like that among us to-day, who are simply disciples of expediency. There is nothing so

sacred to them that they cannot bend it into conformity to the special requirements of any place or time. When they are at Rome they always do as the Romans do. Like the chameleon they are always able to assume the colour of their surroundings. They have no fixed character. Principles they know nothing about. Convictions have no place in their make-up. Like the ancient Pyrrho their judgments are always in suspense. Their opinions change with every shift in the popular notions. But really there are no more disagreeable people than those pliable souls who make it a point of always agreeing with you, and who would rather sell their souls than express dissent from any one in authority. The name of such people is legion. They are people who never take a stand for anything. They know nothing that is worth taking a stand for. Their whole purpose is to wriggle through this world in as slick a way as possible, taking as little trouble as they can, and seeing that their own hides are not scratched. Miserable people they are, shifty, characterless. It is a puzzle to me how God ever can do anything with them, and they are not worth the devil wasting time on them. Their character is always plastic, taking its shape from the pressure brought to bear upon it at the time, and never hardening into fixedness. They always agree with you when you are with them, and ten minutes afterwards when they are with some one who entirely disagrees with you they agree with him. And if they happen to be with you and your opponent at the same time they take no stand with either, or else try to agree with both at the same time and so make a disgraceful straddle. Such a man will, like a well-known Baptist professor, lead a congregation devoutly in prayer as though it meant something, and will make it a part of his teaching in a theological seminary

and print it in one of his books that "the only prayer which we have any moral right to offer is precisely the prayer which after all we ourselves must answer." Or if he is a leader in one of the creedal churches he will stand in the pulpit leading the people in the recitation of a creed every sentence of which he will admit he believes to be false.

Now to be sure it is the very genius of Protestantism to recognize the right of revolt against the authority of man-made creeds. We do not acknowledge the right of any body of Christian people to formulate and impose their creed upon us. But we repudiate the authority of man-made creeds because we bow to the authority of a God-given Book. Holding this basic doctrine that the Bible was written by men divinely inspired and recognizing its authority over us we reserve the right to sit in judgment on all creeds that have been made by men, testing them by what the Word of God says. But people who hold to such convictions are not loose in their views of Christian truth. The fact is that the simple acceptance of the Bible as God's Word, authoritative in faith and life, means the acceptance of a pretty definite body of doctrine.

There are some who declare that definite convictions of truth are not needed as a bond of fellowship in making a church. I knew an eminent pastor of a Congregational church in the suburbs of New York who said to a company of Unitarian people who were thinking of building a church of their own, "You do not need to have your own church. You will feel quite at home among us." He said also to the Baptists of his community who were thinking of building a meeting-house, "You do not need to build your own church. Come with us. You will feel entirely at home." I cannot

conceive what sort of preaching they could have from that pulpit that would suit those who revered Jesus Christ as God manifest in the flesh and would suit also those who regarded Him as a man and nothing more. Yet it is the contention to-day that people of every variety of view should be able to hold fellowship in the same church. You may believe that Jesus Christ was supernaturally born as the Scriptures say or that He was simply the natural son of Joseph and Mary; that the Scriptures were divinely inspired or that they were merely the product of men's thinking; that Christ died as our substitute on the cross or that He simply died as a martyr to His faith as many another man has done; that Christ will come back to this world according to His promise or that He was deceived about His return, being misled by the notions that prevailed among His people at that time. It makes no difference, the same church ought to be big enough to include people of all degrees of faith or lack of faith.

It may be that there are churches that never have made any confession of faith but I have no knowledge of such a church. It is inconceivable that an ecclesiastical council of any sort would recognize as a church a group of people who were unwilling to make a statement of what they believe. Men cannot walk together unless they be agreed. The first impulse to unite in a working or worshipping body comes from the ascertained agreement in the constituent members' faith. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick thinks you can found an acceptable church with no creed but "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and soul and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." He says that he wants a church that Abraham Lincoln could join, and Abraham Lincoln said he could join a

church that had no creed but that great summing up of the old law. No man can outdo me in the reverence I feel for the character and the memory of Abraham Lincoln. But when I wish to know how a Christian church should be constituted I do not go to Abraham Lincoln, but to Jesus Christ. He asked of every member of His Church more than the keeping of the ancient law. Of a young man who said that he had kept all the law He asked more. He said to him, "One thing thou lackest. Go sell all that thou hast and come and follow me." You cannot become a Christian of any sort except by an obedient relation to Jesus Christ. "Follow me" is the invariable command of the Saviour. In Moses' law is no profession of faith in Christ, no vow to follow Him. That fine summing up of the law of Moses might serve as an excellent basis for a Jewish synagogue, but not for a Christian church, hardly for a Unitarian church. Jesus Christ's constant insistence was that men should believe on Him. On every page of the New Testament it is insisted again and again, with a reiteration that is impressive, that men must believe on Christ.

Men are acting to-day as though an intelligent faith in Christ is of little account. They bid us do the works of God, that is sufficient, they say. But Jesus Christ said differently. When some men came to Him expressly asking what they should do that they might work the works of God, He said, "This is the work of God that ye should believe on him whom he hath sent." Our denominational leaders in every church have been saying for years, "Stop talking about what we believe. Let us do our work unitedly." No doubt Jesus Christ would say to them to-day as He said to the Jews of old, "Do our work? This is the work of God, that ye believe."

You will remember that on another occasion Jesus

Christ pictured men saying to Him at the last day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name have cast out demons; and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Then He declares that He will say unto them, "I never knew you. Depart from me ye that work iniquity." Very evidently social service cannot be taken in place of belief, if we are to take the word of Jesus Christ about it.

I was greatly interested during a visitation of schools which I made a few years ago in talks which I had with many of the students. It was interesting, sadly so, to see in how soft and dilettante a way they handled truth, especially religious truth. A young woman in one of our western colleges said she could not see why the denomination was so disturbed about what was being taught in the schools, "for," said she, "what I believe has nothing to do with my religion." That sounded both ludicrous and shocking when it was first spoken, but on reflection one can see that that is substantially what many of our religious leaders are saying to-day: "Oh, stop talking about what we believe. That has nothing to do with our religion. Let each one believe what he pleases. Religion is to finish this task of ours."

A few years ago a missionary society of one of our great religious denominations accepted a large gift whose income the donor said should be used only for the support of missionaries who accepted such simple articles of faith as the inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, a vicarious atonement, the bodily resurrection of Christ, and the certainty of His coming again. One would think that any Christian would agree to such simple conditions as that. No, to the surprise of many those simple conditions threw the denomination into tumult. All over the land the matter was discussed as

to whether a missionary society ought to accept gifts on the express condition that the income be used to propagate the faith which we now hold, and which we have held with firmness for nineteen hundred years, and all because such a statement of faith might prove a burden to some. And lest the discussion of what we believe might prove disturbing to the denominational work, the president of the general denominational convention sent out an appeal that there should be no discussion of the fundamental articles of our faith, but rather that all the members of the churches should get together and do the things which as a denomination they had planned to do. It is the old plausible, but fallacious cry that it makes no difference what we believe if we only do what is right. It shoves even faith in Jesus Christ into the background and declares that the main thing after all is that we make the world better by ameliorating the conditions in which multitudes of our fellow-men are living, heal the sick, feed the hungry, teach the ignorant, and so on, and if we do these things our faith will take care of itself.

The Bible does not teach any such notion as that. Jesus Christ does not teach that. He put it the other way about. He said, "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Jesus Christ said that our belief, especially our belief in Him, is primary and all important. All the work in the world will not amount to anything if first of all you do not believe on Him. If your belief is right all the rest will take care of itself. If your belief is right, all the work that you ought to do will be done. The real reason why our churches are baffled in their work of soul saving, and our missionary societies have failed year after year in raising the money needed for their work is that our religious leaders in all the denominations have been pooh-poohing

that necessity of belief in Christ and have been refusing to state what their faith is. Such leaders, if they had been at the Diet of Worms where Martin Luther stood on trial for his faith, and thought he might have to die for what he believed, would have whispered to him, "Don't be a fool, Luther. What difference does it make what a man believes?" Luther thought it did make a difference, and so when he had stated what he believed he set himself and said, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me!"

Set over against a man like Luther a representative man of our age, Ernst Renan, the distinguished French church historian, of whom it is said that he had "an easy tolerance born of the conviction that no faith was worth a struggle, much less a martyrdom." How admirably Renan represents those people among us who do not wish us to speak of the fundamentals of our faith lest some be disturbed. What a contemptible character he is who believes nothing very positively and is willing to change that faith any time at all in order to keep the peace and make things pleasant. Put such a man as that alongside of Paul whose sufferings for Christ were so many and so varied that they cannot be catalogued. How impossible it would be to put the name of such a shifty creature in the list of the heroes of the faith which we find in the epistle to the Hebrews. How the name of such a creature fades away before the names of the Christian martyrs that make the history of the world splendid!

I confess I do not wish any one to preach to me about what he does not believe. I do not wish any one to preach to me on any subject about which he is simply in the investigating stage. I am like the Swedish church sexton who said to his pastor, "Too many preachers say

'I tink, I tink,' when they ought to say 'I know because God says so.' " I do not want for my minister one who is a mere question mark. I want him to have done his investigating before he goes into the pulpit, and the things he announces there I wish him to be certain of. If I go to a strange land I do not engage as my guide one who is just groping his way about. I put myself in the care of one who knows all the nooks and crannies of the streets, and the buildings and the ways of the people. If I am sick I do not put myself under the care of a man who doubts whether there is such a thing as disease, and who thinks it makes little difference what prescription he gives, all being equally good or equally bad, the only sure thing being that they are equally profitable to him. I want my physician to have at his command the assured results of hundreds of years of observation of disease and of experiments in remedies. I do not want to entrust my life to some one who is simply guessing about things and who knows no more about diseases and their cure than I myself do. And when I go to church and my soul is full of needs, I do not wish to listen to a man who is bewildered in his thinking, and uncertain in his faith. I often think of a man, a very intelligent man, a college graduate, a successful man of business, who told me that he went to church one Sunday morning in New York. He heard a sermon on prayer. He said pathetically, "I went into that church a praying man. I came out wondering whether there is any use in praying." It was my delightful task to lead him back to faith in a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God, but I could not help having some thoughts about that preacher who was set for the defense of the Gospel, who was using his place and power to undermine the faith men already had. Lord Macaulay

was right in exhorting preachers to tell him the things they believed, and not to tell him their doubts, because he had doubts enough of his own.

There is no possibility of winning battles for Christ if we falter in making the call to battle. We must go out with an air of authority and with evident confidence in our cause. When an army feels that it has little or nothing worth fighting for, the battle line wavers and defeat is speedy and complete. There is no slightest chance of our conquering the world for Jesus Christ if our faith in Him is uncertain. You may depend upon it, it was no uncertain faith in Christ that took Adoniram Judson to Burma, or Robert Morrison to China, or Henry Martyn to India, or David Mackay to Uganda, or John G. Paton to the South Seas, or Wilfred Grenfell to Labrador. Since David Livingstone led the way to the dark continent more than two thousand men have laid down their lives as missionaries to Africa. They were martyrs to the savagery of men and to the cruel climate. They were happy in their martyrdom since it was for Christ they did it. But they never would have gone and it was a blunder and a crime to let them go, if there is no more in the Christian faith than some preachers and teachers to-day allow.

The only thing that drove Paul into every land of his time, and enabled him to bear sufferings severe and countless was the fact that he was inspired by a confident faith. He was able to say "I know, I know, I know" concerning the truth he proclaimed to men. Paul was so unfaltering in his convictions that he could stand before Nero, the emperor of the world, without a tremor of fear. He had back of him greater authority than that of Nero. He seemed as he stood before the Roman tribunal to be nothing but a prisoner, but as he stood

before an earthly king, he represented the King of kings. He was in bonds, but he was an ambassador in bonds for the Son of God. That is the sort of man that moves the world. He is the only sort of man who can move the world. No great moral or religious movement ever has been led by any man except one of positive faith, and none ever will be. A man who has unwavering faith in the Master he represents and in the truth he stands for, cannot but be an intrepid man. The cause he fights for is sure of ultimate triumph whatever disaster comes temporarily to him. With Arthur Hugh Clough he can say:

> "It fortifies my soul to know
> That though I perish, Truth is so;
> That howsoe'er I stray and range,
> Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.
> I steadier step when I recall
> That, if I slip, thou dost not fall."

II

CAN WE BELIEVE IN GOD?

"Ye believe in God."—JOHN 14:1.

NO man should speak of God without thinking. And when a man thinks about God it does not make him talkative. It fills his soul with awe and imposes silence on his lips. To feel one's self in the presence of God is to hear the voice that spoke to Moses from the burning bush saying: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

The followers of Mohammed never tread on a chance piece of paper that lies on the ground lest the name of Allah be written on it. Even they with their false religion know better than to play familiar with Him before whom the archangels veil their faces. Sir Isaac Newton was in the habit of uncovering his head whenever he heard the name of God mentioned. The British philosopher, Robert Boyle, never pronounced the name of God without a perceptible pause. They set us an example well worth our following.

It is a sense of the greatness of the subject that makes preachers hesitate to speak on such a subject as "The Fact and Meaning of God." You might search through a large library of modern sermons and not find it treated once. A theme like that belongs to the great preachers of the past. Jonathan Edwards would be equal to it. Francis Wayland also. Canon Liddon might appropriately treat it in one of his University Sermons. Spur-

geon would have revelled in it. And yet if one approaches it in a right spirit, smaller men may undertake to say something about it.

Rowland Hill was once trying to convey to his hearers some idea of the greatness of God's love. Suddenly he stopped and raising his eyes to heaven, he exclaimed: "I am unable to reach the lofty theme. Yet I do not think that the smallest fish that swims in the ocean ever complains of the ocean's vastness. So it is with me. With my puny powers I can plunge with delight into a subject the immensity of which I shall never be able to comprehend."

Whether the pulpit is discussing this subject or not men of the world are doing so. On a recent trip that I made to the West as I left New York, I observed a man reading the leading editorial of a newspaper that is recognized as "yellow" from one end of the land to the other. The editorial began, "What is God? You have asked that question. Every human being has asked it. The heathen has answered the question with an idol, the wise man with an ideal."

Robert W. Chambers recently wrote a novel in which through one of its characters he discusses the nature of God. What he says might not help us here, but the fact that he discusses the subject at all is important. That book the newsboy was peddling through the train on which I rode.

On that same trip I bought two magazines. One of them was *The American Magazine.* It contained an article about God by Dr. Frank Crane, in which he discussed the subject as you would wish a man to do who had some sense of God. The other was *The North American Review,* in which was an article by John Burroughs, in which he declared plainly that in all his searches for

God in nature he was disappointed and came out of his search at the very point where he entered upon the trail.

I am not particularly interested just now in the conclusions these men reached. This is the impressive thing, that a common, even a vulgar newspaper, a serious novel, a popular magazine, and a standard Review, almost the only pieces of literature I came upon in a railway journey of two thousand miles, should each of them have contained a serious discussion of the existence and the character of God. Clearly enough men of the world are facing this subject even if the preachers are not.

The Bible does not tell men that there is a God. It never makes any argument to prove it. It assumes that men believe it. Its purpose is to give men right views of God, and to tell them how they may come into right relations with God. Cicero long ago said, "There is no people so wild and savage as not to have believed in a God, even if they have been unacquainted with His nature." If an uninspired man had been writing the Bible it is likely that at the very beginning he would have proceeded to demonstrate the existence of God, as practically all text-books of theology do. But the Bible does no such thing. It assumes that God exists, and then proceeds to tell us something of what He has done, what His character is, and what He expects of us, His creatures.

It is a singular thing that the Bible says nothing about the wickedness of not believing in God. It simply says that not to do so is foolish. It says "The fool hath said in his heart 'There is no God.'" It intimates that believing in God is not so much a matter of piety as of common sense. It declares that men ought not need a revelation from heaven to convince them that there is

a God. Their reason ought to suggest that to them. Men are blamed for worshipping false gods because their reason should have told them better. They are urged to use their reason in order that they may discern the true God. Paul says that God's eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen in the things that He has made, so that even those who have no Bible are without excuse for not discerning Him. The man who thinks can find abundant proofs of God's existence wherever he turns his eyes.

Napoleon overheard two officers arguing about God's existence, one for it, the other against. The emperor stopped, waved his hand toward the starry sky, and said, "Gentlemen, if there is no God, will you tell me who made all those." Galileo, in prison for his advanced thought about things, was asked why he persisted in believing in God. He pointed to a bit of broken straw on the floor of his cell and said, "If I had no other reason to believe in the wisdom and goodness of God I could argue them out from that straw on the floor of this dungeon." You are familiar with the story of the Arab who was guiding a French skeptic across the desert. Now and then the Arab would spread his mat on the sand and kneel down and pray. That irritated the Frenchman, and once when the Arab got up from his prayer he said to him, "How do you know there is a God?" The Arab replied, "How do I know that a man and a camel passed our tent last night? I know it by their footprints on the sand. You want to know how I know there is a God. Look at that sunset. Is that the footprint of a man?" That is good reasoning. You can find God's signature in every muscle of your body and in every hair of your head if you are willing to look for it. There is not a leaf, nor a flower, nor a dewdrop but bears the marks of God's hands, and every common

bush is afire with God's presence, if you have the eyes to see it. Away back in David's time, thoughtful men felt that God spoke to them through the works of His hands. David sang, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork." He who says there is no God says in effect that the universe made itself; that there was no Creator; that no mind governs it; that the world rushes on uncared for; and that as it made itself, and goes of itself, so it may stop and fall to pieces of itself. Is there any particular intelligence displayed in such a judgment as that?

In similar fashion our æsthetic sensibilities and our moral convictions, our ideals of beauty, and goodness, and truth, and righteousness, drive us to a belief in God as the source of them and their fulfillment. As Victor Cousin said they are "the mysterious ladder on which the soul can mount from the finite to the infinite." Unless it can so mount the human soul is the most unsatisfied thing in the universe. St. Augustine spoke truly when he said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee." Our unsatisfied yearnings for God are a proof that He exists unless nature has outraged us in making us. What men have needed to know for their guidance in right doing God has told them either in the instincts He put within them or in the works of nature about them which He gave them intelligence to interpret. What they could not learn from the things about them, —how they could be saved from sin,—He taught them by express revelation.

What a man thinks about God shapes all his other thinking. A woman once said to Professor Benjamin Jowett of Balliol College, Oxford, "Dr. Jowett, what do you think of God?" Professor Jowett looked at her

very seriously and said, "It matters very little what I think of God, but it matters a great deal what God thinks of me." To be sure that is true. It is vastly more important what God thinks of us than what we think of Him. But after all that answer is bright and evasive rather than satisfactory. It does make some difference what we think of God, not to God perhaps, but certainly to us. For what a man thinks of God shapes his whole life.

It has been said that you can judge the value of a religion by what it thinks of man. But there is something more fundamental than that. The value of a religion depends on the truth and the sufficiency of its idea of God. If we start with a little God we have a little religion quite insufficient to meet the great needs of a man's heart. You cannot erect a big building on a little base. Some of you have been in the East India Museum in London. They have there an elaborately carved idol from India, that has twelve hands and in every hand a different instrument of cruelty. A man who believes in and worships that sort of a god could not possibly be the same kind of a man as the man who believes in the God whom the Bible proclaims to be "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

There have been men who professed to know all about God. They have undertaken to define His attributes and to announce with precision what His decrees are, and in their sermons and text-books they have made what we might call a map of Christ's nature as sharply defined as any map we have of New York State. There have been other men who were as sure that they knew nothing about God as the first were that they knew all about Him. They have gone so far as to say that we

do not know and cannot know that there is a God. The one set of men are blind through conceit, the other blind through their impenetrable ignorance. They are like the two men who were in a blind asylum. One was a Cornish miner, the other a Swiss shepherd. The Swiss shepherd asked the Cornish miner, "How came you to be blind?" and he answered, "Too much darkness. I lived in the mine so long that my sight gave way." The miner then said to the Swiss shepherd, "How came you to be blind?" and the shepherd answered, "Too much light. I lived on the snow mountains. The glare was so great that my sight gave way." In one case blindness came from using the eyes too much, and in the other case from using them too little. It is precisely so in our knowledge of God. The man who thinks to know all about God is soon lost in mysteries of glory far beyond his comprehension. The man who resolves to know nothing about God is equally lost in the fogs of his own stubbornness and stupidity.

Every man paints his own picture of God. Speak God's name in the ears of a thousand different men and a different conception is aroused in the mind of each one. What we are determines what we see. When the fool says, "There is no God," you are not surprised at that. That is just what you would expect a fool to say. But it proves nothing except his own lack of capacity, that is all.

Emerson told us of an Abolition meeting in Boston in which a politician railed at Sojourner Truth. When the man sat down the tall black woman arose and tapping her head very significantly she said, "Honey, I would tole yeh suthin', but I sees yeh ain't got nuthin' to carry it home in." The old negress spoke a profound truth. It is a man's capacity always that determines his

conception of truth. If a man's brain is short, his views of truth are short, too.

Children are more apt to picture God to themselves than grown-up people are. The pictures of God that we conjure up for ourselves in our childhood seem grotesque to us in our manhood. Any representation of God must seem so, though an adult conceive it and a master hand execute it. The European churches, as you know, are full of pictures of God, and feeble representations they are, even when the hand of Michael Angelo drew them. They present an old man with a great flowing white beard. Sargent's picture of God in the Boston Library gives us a gigantic man, with flowing robes and big boots. I suppose that is the best one can do when a visible sketch of God is demanded. But the mind can conceive a picture such as the hand can never paint. And this is the way the mind goes about the work of constructing its picture of God. We find man at his best and purest and noblest estate. We invest him with all possible attributes of goodness and greatness. And then we enlarge our ideal man until he is infinite, and that is our notion of God. And that method of conceiving God has its warrant in the Bible, for we are told there that man was made in the image of God. But if we follow that plan our God will inevitably reflect what we ourselves are. And so as some one has said,

> "The Ethiop's God has Ethiop's lips,
> Black cheek and woolly hair;
> And the Grecian God a Grecian face,
> Keen-eyed, cold and fair."

The glass through which we see God is darkened and distorted by what we ourselves are, and the shadow of our imperfections falls on Him.

And so God determined to give us a picture of Himself that is perfect. He sent into the world One who was "the express image of his person." He came down and dwelt among us in the person of His Son. God was so really in Jesus Christ that the Master could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In the Rospigliosi Palace in Rome is Guido Reni's famous fresco "The Aurora," a work unequalled in that period for nobility of line and poetry of colour. It is painted on a lofty ceiling. As you stand on the pavement and look up at it, your neck stiffens, your head grows dizzy, and the figures become hazy and indistinct. And so the owner of the palace has placed a broad mirror near the floor. In it the picture is reflected and you may sit down before it and study the wonderful work in comfort. Precisely that Jesus Christ does for us when we try to get some notion of God. He is the mirror of Deity. He is the express image of God's person. He interprets God to our dull hearts. In Him God becomes visible and intelligible to us. We cannot by any amount of searching find out God. The more we try the more we are bewildered. Then Jesus Christ appears. He is God stooping down to our level and He enables our feeble thoughts to get some real hold on God Himself. In one of Mrs. Deland's stories, the boy David looking on a picture of Jesus Christ said, "Is it a good photograph of God?" The Bible says it is. "He is the express image of God's person."

A sick woman said to Richard Cecil, the famous English preacher, "Sir, I have no notion of God. I can form no notion of Him. You talk to me about Him, but I cannot get a single idea that means anything to me." "But," said Mr. Cecil, "you know how to think of Jesus Christ as He was here in the world. That is God."

"Ah, sir," she said, "that gives me something to lay hold upon. There I rest. I understand God in His Son."

And yet I have often wondered what notion of God we have after all God's efforts to make Himself known to us. Is there any other name which to most people is so empty of pleasant suggestion as the name of God? Here and there, it is true, have been rare souls with such a knowledge of God that to them His name was above every other name in heaven and on earth. But take people in general. Take congregations of people like those we meet with in worship every Sunday. They certainly are as well brought up as average people are. When the name of God is pronounced what thoughts and feelings are stirred? Is it a name that makes their souls quiver with delight? Is there something in it both exhilarating and restful to you? When you are tired and worn is there something in the mention of God's name that brings down the dews of heaven to cool your parched brow? Is there in it everything that is gentle and tender and sweet and loving and lovable? Does it mean all that you ought to be and ten million times more of goodness and lovableness than you feel you ever can attain? There never was any one who felt a deeper delight in God than Frederick W. Faber did. If you read Faber's poems you will find that he always rises into raptures when he speaks of God. In his hymn called 'The Heavenly Father," he says:

> "Only to sit and think of God,
> Oh what a joy it is!
> To think the thought, to breathe the name,
> Earth has no higher bliss."

He is literally enamoured of God as David was at times. And when he brings earthly joys into comparison with

the joy he has in God they fade into nothingness. You remember that rapturous poem in which he says:

> "Oh utter but the name of God
> Down in your heart of hearts,
> And see how from the world at once
> All tempting light departs."

Sometimes I think that our notions about God compare with the reality about Him pretty much as some bit of a cramped, ill-cared for garden plot compares with the miles and miles of meadows that God sows in the spring-time with buttercups and daisies. Not far from where I spend the summers there is a cottage where a little girl was living. She had made a little garden patch by the front door of her house. Instead of putting into it some sort of cultivated flowers, she simply transferred to it a little bunch of flowers from the field. She dug up a clump of daisies and put them in. Most of them faded at once and all her care induced only one stalk to bloom feebly. It was the most pitiful thing imaginable compared with the great stretch of daisies that we could see from the hilltop going as far as the eye could reach. One day late in the summer I saw she had put into her little plot a bunch of goldenrod. There stood the faded stalks of the plants she had put there the day before, and the goldenrod, too, was withering from being transplanted. After looking at that child's poor garden I rode a hundred miles and more, and I saw the goldenrod on every side so plenteous that it seemed as though the sun itself had fallen and stained the earth with its colour, and I thought that that little patch of a child's garden is to the boundless stretch of the flowering fields just about what our notion of the glories of God's character is compared with what He really is. You cannot possibly exaggerate God's goodness and beauty.

He is better than poets' songs have represented Him to be. He is better than dying saints have imagined Him to be. He is better than anything the thoughts of men can conceive Him to be. When this world's scenes have passed away and we see Him as He is in the world to come, we shall find that the reality is infinitely above anything our hearts have dreamed.

To be certain that God exists and that we are in right relations with Him is the only source of enduring peace of mind. Archdeacon Farrar once asked Robert Browning whether there were any lines in all the poetry he had written which expressed in a few words all that was fundamental to his thought and life. Mr. Browning said "Yes" and then he quoted these lines:

> "He at least believed in soul,
> Was very sure of God."

Ah, it is a great thing to be able to say that one is very sure of God. If you say that and mean it, you can walk through a much disturbed world and yet have a serene mind. If you are sure of God, nothing else need give you the slightest concern. If you have no sense of a ruling and overruling God, the thoughtful man sees enough to distress him even when life moves on in its usual fashion without special shock or horror. William Rathbone Greg, the English philosopher, saw so many malignant diseases and cancers eating the life out of civilized communities that he quite lost heart and said that the best thing that could happen to our planet would be for it to fall into the sun or be shattered by collision with some other planet. If you lose sight of the power and purpose of God that is as good an end as one could hope for. But God has better things in mind for our planet. It is better to redeem and recon-

struct the world than to destroy the world. And the greatness and power of God are pledged to that end. Things are not to go on from bad to worse until the corruption of the world is complete. The fact that God's Son taught us to pray for His kingdom to come is proof that He intends to answer that prayer, and that He will redeem the world and establish His people in it.

Let me quote Sojourner Truth again. In the dark days before the Civil War when everything seemed lost for the slave, Frederick Douglass was speaking very pessimistically to a great audience in Rochester, N. Y., when Sojourner Truth got up and stretching out her bony arm toward the platform, she pointed at him and said, "Frederick, is God dead?" There is the crux of the whole matter. Do you believe in a living God or not? If God is not dead we may still expect that justice will be done ultimately. Wrong may triumph for a while; the innocent may suffer; the good cause may have many a setback; it may seem as though all that is right has gone to the dogs, but if you still believe that God lives and reigns, you cannot despair. No matter how awry things may be; no matter how mighty wrong may become; no matter how many of our ideals may be shattered; no matter how large the majority against righteousness is; if we can but believe that God is still on the throne we can go about our work undisturbed. If the Lord reigns we can sing as Browning's Pippa did in the streets of Asolo, "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world."

Many things that have gone on in the world for the last twenty-five years have saddened right-thinking people. Society has suffered a great relapse into barbarism. Many have seemed to believe more in force than in righteousness. The mailed fist has seemed likely to be

deified. Napoleon's creed that God was on the side of the strongest battalions has once more come to the front, and hardly a nation has remanded it to the rear. But God has not abdicated despite appearances. He is still in control of things, be sure of that. It may be that the world will have to suffer yet more before men feel as they should their utter dependence on God. It may be that the burdens we are carrying will yet more overstrain us, and the tasks that confront us will become more bewildering, yet if we look to God and depend on Him we can face the future with confidence.

But the idea of God that is needed in this period of the world's reconstruction is not one that we have been accustomed to preach. We have so misconceived the meaning of John's statement that God is love, that we have spoken as though God were a piece of infinite mushiness, looking on all men alike. Dr. Dale of Birmingham, for many years before he died, lamented that "nobody is afraid of God now." It is a very significant statement, and it ought to arouse serious misgivings in the mind of every Christian preacher. It is undeniably true that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and yet there is reason to believe that all fear of the Lord has so utterly faded out of the thought of men that not even the veriest rascal that walks the earth is afraid of God now. But in these recent years human nature has disclosed itself anew to us, and these times have reinterpreted God to us. We have come to feel that all that is best in life is lost to us unless the God who is on the throne of the universe is one who will deal out justice to men. Sickened by brutal atrocities and by impudent dishonesties which are not done yet, we have come to feel that God could not be God unless He is angry with the wicked every day.

The real prophet of God is one who can stand up in the midst of prevailing wickedness, and say to those who sit in misery and desolation, "Do not lose heart, hope in God despite your anguish. A day of recompense is coming. God will right things by and by, if you are patient." It is a great thing in times of wide-spread distress, when things seem as wrong as they well could be, to be commissioned by God to proclaim to the world the truth as Lowell did when he said:

"Right forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne;
Yet that scaffold sways the future
And behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own."

I do not know how it seems to you, but to me it is a veritable gospel, a piece of good news, that God hates sin and means to punish it. To be sure, if we have the spirit of Christ we would that all men should turn to Him and live. It is our business in life to persuade men that God will welcome and pardon all who turn to Him. But it would be a terrible thing if those who turn and those who refuse to turn should come out at the same place in the end. It would be a dreadful thing if a man could go on misbehaving himself and then get all the bliss that belongs to good behaviour. What an unjust thing it would be if a man should give himself to Jesus Christ, and should live a good, kind, pure life, refusing to turn aside to evil when it seems pleasant, and in all ways denying himself for the sake of the right, and then at the end should find himself banished to the wretchedness that belongs to the bad man. And it would be an equally unjust thing if the man of careless, selfish, wicked life should at the end be welcomed to the bliss that belongs to the good man.

Any man who has eyes and is willing to use them must see that things are not dealt out evenly in this world. Men do not have an equal chance. Society is not a system of perfect justice. Something surely is wrong when Dives rides in a chariot, and Lazarus begs at his gate; when the righteous go to the wall and the wicked are put into office; when Nero luxuriates in a palace and Paul languishes in a dungeon. And God is going to set such things right some day. He is a God of justice. That certainly is part of the message that any man who speaks of God must give.

These are the things that ought to be fundamental to all our thinking in these days; that the God who assuredly rules in the universe is an absolutely righteous God; that He cannot look on iniquity with the least degree of allowance; that He has compassion on the weak and the downtrodden, but He is relentless toward the oppressor; that while He is full of mercy toward the most inexcusable sinner who repents and turns to Him, yet with exact justice He will cast from Him forever all who persist in their sin; and that He is almighty to carry out His righteous plans. God is for the good man and the good cause and He intends to lift them up. God is not only against the bad man and the bad cause, but He is able to throw them down and He intends to throw them down. There is no need to worry about the future. We need not tremble for God's cause in the world. An almighty and a just God is at the head of things, He watches all the affairs of the world, He is in control of them, He faints not neither is weary, He is full of compassion and tender mercy, and He is exactly just as well, and will make His awards in righteousness to every man.

III

CAN WE BELIEVE IN THE BIBLE?

"Thy word is truth."—JOHN 17:17.

THE Parliament which made Oliver Cromwell Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland, appointed a Committee to draw up a list of the Fundamentals of Faith. It seems that the instrument of government which gave Cromwell his authority said that all who professed "faith in God by Jesus Christ" should have free exercise of their religion throughout the realm. And this committee was appointed to define what that phrase "faith in God by Jesus Christ" meant. Dr. John Owen, the greatest theologian of his time, and Richard Baxter, the author of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest,* were members of that Committee. When they got at their task of defining what the limits of religious toleration were, it did not take them long to discover as Baxter quaintly said "how ticklish a business the enumeration of fundamentals is."

But we cannot go astray in declaring that it is fundamental with Protestant Christians to acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures. The oft-quoted words of William Chillingworth are a true statement of our position, "The Bible, I say, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants." The Bible is not looked upon by us as other books are. It has always been regarded as our supreme rule of faith and practice. It is not regarded simply as a piece of literature. Literature is addressed

by man to man. The Bible is revelation. Revelation is addressed by God to man.

Just here is the heart of the present controversy in the Protestant world. It is a conflict between those who accept the authority of the Bible because it is divinely inspired, and those who acknowledge no authority outside the human mind and recognize no communication of truth as superior to the utterances of reason or science. It is the old battle that has been fought many times in the past in which rationalism is arrayed against revelation.

Many years ago I said to the Council that examined me for ordination: "I accept the Bible unmutilated." Those were the days of the famous Andover controversy. Some who were present that afternoon in the little white country church where I began my ministry, did not like the statement. Many would not like it to-day. And yet I did not then and I do not now mean to make any insinuating suggestion. I simply meant to declare my absolute confidence in the oneness of the Holy Scriptures, and to intimate that any subtraction from them would be a mutilation of them. It was not an ill-considered statement when I made it at the first, though I was then but a youth fresh from college and the theological seminary. And I am willing to make the statement again to-day, after many years have furnished me with ample opportunities for careful and profound consideration, opportunities which have not passed unused.

During all these years I have felt no fear about the Book. I have enjoyed an unshakable conviction that it is God's book; that He is able to take care of it; and that He will take care of it. The people who have sat under my ministry have known that I never was afraid of criticism of the Bible. The spirit of some critics I

have condemned and their dicta I have unhesitatingly repudiated. But criticism so far as it meant careful, intelligent, honest and scholarly study of the Scriptures, I have always welcomed. The Bible itself invites and common sense approves it. The higher the claims any book makes for itself, and the more positive its demands for our obedience to it, the more searching our scrutiny of it should be. I have no use for the superstitious credulity that is determined to believe the Book no matter what its contents. And I have no use on the other hand for the critic who is determined not to believe no matter what its contents. The blind believer and the blind disbeliever are equally fools, both of them having cast reason to the winds. And I do not know but the man who professes to believe in the Bible but denounces those who undertake to examine its claims, and manifests fear about the results of the examination, does the Book more harm than the worst critic of the Word could do. It is another case of needing the Lord to take care of our friends, while we ourselves are quite able to take care of our enemies. He does not believe in the Bible who hugs it to his bosom and runs off with it into darkness fearing to bring it to the light lest its statements be disproved. But he believes in the Bible who confidently seeks to have all possible light shed upon it, and who feels that the more we study the Bible, the more we shall see what an infinite treasure we have in this book of God.

Now while I have not shut my ears against anything that scholarship has to say about the Bible; and while I have done all that a busy pastor could do to keep up with the work of Biblical students at home and abroad, yet I am obliged to say, and I say it without any hesitation or sense of shame, that I have to-day pretty much

the same Bible that my godly father gave me many years ago. There are just as many books in my Bible as there were in his. The parables are all there. The miracles are unshattered. The history remains trustworthy. The requirements are just as high. The assurances are just as comforting. The promises are just as reliable. I find myself preaching from the Book pretty much as he did. And I make the bold claim that in spite of the supposedly superior light of the present he was as expert a student of the Word as we. Not with grammar and lexicon. He did not know much about varied readings, or interpolations, or clay tablets, or the results of excavations. But he knew God as the men who walk the halls of Scripture knew Him, and he knew how to make others acquainted with Him.

It was the boast of Tertullian, the author of that fine saying, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," that every mechanic among the Christians of his day knew God and could make Him known to others, and it delighted Tertullian to set that fact in contrast with the ignorance about God of Thales, the Greek philosopher, just as Tertullian's Master once said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes." Well, then, like those Christians of old, my father knew God and he believed His Word implicitly. He did not know anything about the "Joseph traditions" concerning which modern scholars have done so much guessing, and when he told me the story of Joseph as I stood by his armchair one Sunday afternoon he spoke as though it was all true. He never had heard that Dr. Cheyne said that: "Abraham was simply a typical example of unworldly goodness elaborated by several schools of

writers." He thought that Abraham was a real man, faithful enough to be called the "friend of God" and when he told me the story of Abraham offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice, I could fairly see the angel swoop down and arrest the hand that was uplifted for the slaughter. Of course, he did not know anything about the story of the deluge being a myth which the Hebrews had borrowed from the Babylonians, and that it was fundamentally a myth of winter and the sun god. He thought it was a true record of God's wrath against a world that had given itself up to sin. And so one Sunday afternoon after a shower when we took a walk together he told me that there was once a terrific and prolonged downpour of rain, and that the waters prevailed over the earth, and God's enemies were destroyed and only a handful of people were saved in an ark, and through them humanity had another chance. And I remember walking by his side that afternoon full of awe as one who had seen the judgments of the Lord. And when every day that dear father of mine used to read from that book and then fall on his knees and talk with God every one of his children felt that God was a reality and that He was there in that room with us. No wonder, then, that having spent my childhood under the tuition of a man who knew God face to face, I feel much more obligation to him for showing me the Bible as a living Book than I feel to these so-called scholars who have taken what Jean Astruc called "conjectures" and extended them and acted as though they were "certainties," and have merely shown how skilfully what seems to them a dead book can be dissected.

There is another way of knowing the Bible than by a critical study of the text or a scrutiny of its origins, and that is by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. The

Bible knows how to bear witness to itself. The divine qualities are intrinsic and they are self-authenticated. They are not dependent on anybody or anything outside for certification. We do not believe the Bible because of anybody's attestation of it but because of what it is in itself. It is not necessary for us to have the countersignature of Tübingen, or Leipsic, or Berlin, or Oxford, before we read the divine Word. The Psalmist prayed, "Open THOU mine eyes and I shall behold wondrous things out of thy law" and to all appearances his prayer was answered. The discouraged disciples after the great tragedy found in Him who was dead but was now alive forevermore, the teacher they needed and it is written, "Then opened HE their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures." Grammar and lexicon and historical acumen are no doubt valuable in their places, but men may know the Bible well without them. And on the other hand men may feel that they know the source of every paragraph in the Book and the historical setting of every incident recorded, and the biography of every word that is used, and yet altogether miss the inner meaning of the Book. It is as true today as ever it was that some things are revealed to us through the Spirit. And I cannot escape the conviction that if we approach the Bible in sympathy and gratitude we get more from the Bible than if we come with challenge and criticism. Scholars who are disposed to sneer at the average man's attitude toward the Bible should remember that it was to very plain men that Jesus Christ said, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom but to them it was not given."

There are a score of lines of argument we might follow to prove the divine origin of the Bible. Let me take but one, and find in the marvellous unity of the Book

evidence that the hand that made it was divine. I will speak of the oneness of the Bible in its effects, in its structure, and in the personality it presents.

A man who never had seen a Bible who should pick it up and look into it would perceive at once that it is not like other books. It deals with wonderful things. It speaks in a wonderful way. The majesty of its words makes them sound different from men's words. There is an impressive positiveness in the statements it makes. There is an air of authority in the way it commands you. There is an insight into our nature that makes us tremble; a perception of our needs that fills us with hope; and a power to satisfy those needs that goes beyond what we dared to hope. And these qualities so pervade the entire book that there are many people who declare that they can open the Bible at random and find the inspiration and comfort they need, and I am not disposed to dispute what they say. For it is undeniable that every part of the Bible has been instrumental in awakening men to their sense of need, in relieving their consciences of their burden of guilt, in enlightening their minds as to what they ought to do, and in making their lives beautiful with gladness.

Archbishop Leighton has told us of a man who entered a church in Glasgow in his day and heard the fifth chapter of Genesis read. That chapter, as you know, is nothing but a list of the names of the patriarchs from Adam to Noah, and the number of years they lived. Did I say nothing but a list of names? No, for we have in that chapter the most marvellous description of a good man's life, and the aptest account of his departure from this world, that ever were written, "Enoch walked with God, and he was not for God took him." But it was not that verse that impressed the listener that day.

Archbishop Leighton tells us that the man left the church that day a converted man and the thing that converted him was the constant repetition of that phrase, "And he died." Dr. Robert F. Horton in alluding to this incident says, "I believe you can show concerning every book beginning at Genesis and going on to the very end, that every page has its trophies." And then he tells of a French skeptic who was converted by studying for philological purposes that same fifth chapter of Genesis.

No one has a better chance to learn of how the Book finds men out than the missionaries. And what testimony do the missionaries give us? Listen. Robert McAll says that one evening after giving an exposition of Scripture in the city of Lyons a man came to him with tears running down his cheeks and said, "Never have I heard the truth so proclaimed. My conscience answers to it." How wonderfully significant those words are, "My conscience answers to it."

Once when Dr. John Chamberlain had read to the natives of an East Indian city the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, an intelligent Brahmin said to him, "Sir, that chapter was written by one of you missionaries about us Hindus; it describes us so exactly." But nobody disputes that that chapter was written by the apostle Paul eighteen hundred years before our missionaries went to India.

At another time a learned Chinese man was employed by some missionaries to translate the New Testament into Chinese. At first the work of translating had no effect upon the scholarly Chinese man. But after some time he became quite agitated and said, "What a wonderful book this is!" "Why so?" said the missionary. "Because," said the Chinese man, "it tells me so exactly

about myself. It knows all that is in me. The One who made this book must have made me."

Dr. Robert F. Horton, from whom I have already quoted, seems to have made a specialty of preaching about the Bible, and he has made the startling announcement that if any man will with unprejudiced mind read the Bible it will surely bring him to God. He mentions the Moslems. They are particularly difficult to move from their religious faith. He says that the only way a Moslem is ever brought to faith in Christ is when he is induced to read the Bible. If once you can get a Mohammedan to read the Bible his conversion is certain. He can resist preaching. He can resist denunciation, of course. All of us can do that. But he cannot resist the Bible. Dr. Horton gives us an incident of an English officer in Kashmir who was a devout Christian man. He was shooting in the mountains of Kashmir accompanied by his native servant who was a Mohammedan. This Englishman was no more ashamed to be seen praying than his Mohammedan servant was. Every day he read his Bible and prayed in his tent. The servant observed it. He was not surprised at the praying but he was curious about the reading. He asked his master what it was he read. His master explained to him that it was the New Testament, and then he said, "If you would read it, I will get you a copy. But you must promise to read it." The Mohammedan said he would. The English officer procured him a New Testament in his own language. The native read it, and before long he came asking to be baptized, and he became himself a herald of the cross and was no longer a follower of the crescent. And then Dr. Horton says, "This Book left to itself, without note or comment, without explanation or criticism, left in the hands of any reader who is

not hardened or prejudiced and determined to resist it, brings a man to God. You want no better proof of what a book is than that."

Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, has told us in one of his books of a conversation he had with a Japanese gentleman of high intelligence and culture who had accepted Christianity. The good Doctor asked him by what arguments he had been convinced that Christianity was the true religion. He did not get the answer he expected. The thoughtful and learned man said that he had read no books of evidences, but he told how in his heathen days he had been a seeker after truth, and as he studied the cold system of Confucius he longed for a revelation of a personal God. At length a New Testament came into his hands, and as he read it he seemed to be finding at every step just what he had been seeking. When he came to the thirteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians he was fairly dazzled with the glory and truth and felt that it must be divine. And when he read the gospel of John he became sure that Jesus was the Son of God. This seems always to be the result of an unprejudiced, open-minded reading of the Bible. It carries conviction to all who so read it that it comes from God, just as we know that the light about us comes from the sun.

Now when we find this Book so exactly adapted to all races of mankind,—to the passionate Arabian, the sluggish Greenlander, the low born Hottentot, and the high bred Chinese, the philosophic Greek and the practical mind of the Roman, the studious German and the polite Frenchman, the thoughtful Englishman, the enterprising American and the quick-witted Japanese,—when we find it so well meeting the needs of all sorts and conditions of men, we must agree with the learned Chinese man that only the Creator of man could be the Creator

of the Book. It is the one book that appeals to all ages alike. It is the one book that appeals to all classes alike. A Canadian preacher has told us that in his own home one day he went into a room and found his little daughter who at once cried out, "Oh, papa, nurse has been reading me such a beautiful story. Don't stop us please." He found that the nurse had been reading the story of Joseph from the Bible. Soon after he went over to the home of Sir William Dawson, geologist and naturalist, and he found him poring with equal interest over the same story. The same Book for the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the sorrowing and the rejoicing! This is no merely human book. It brings tears to eyes that have been dry because pitiless, and it wipes away tears from eyes that are overflowing. It arouses the careless and it brings peace to the penitent. There is not an experience into which the human soul can come for which this Book has not an appropriate message. Surely we are right when we say that only He who knows man altogether could have made a Book that so exactly helps every man.

From the singularly uniform results that come from reading the pages of this Book we can easily infer that in all its parts it must have a singularly uniform character. And it has. It is a book marked by great diversity, to be sure. If some one who had never seen it before should pick it up and examine it he would find that it is not a single book, but a whole library. Here are sixty-six books bound together. Some of them cover only a page or two and you could read them through in a few minutes. Others are fair size volumes and would take many hours to read aright. These books were written by as many as forty different authors. These

authors lived in different lands. They wrote in several different languages. They represent every social condition; they were kings, courtiers, shepherds, farmers, fishermen, a physician, and a publican; men of every degree of culture. Each author was evidently conscious of being free in the work that he did; he developed his own theme and used his own peculiar style of expression. These men wrote, some of them, as much as fifteen hundred years apart. There was no possibility of collusion. Indeed they did not know that what they wrote was to be a part of a book, so thoroughly independent were they in their writing. And yet the result of their writing is not many books, but one book; a book so intensely one that we bind all its parts together and following the example of John Chrysostom, we call it "The Book," the Bible. And really that is one of the most marvellous things in the world. It is scarcely possible for any two men to report alike about anything they observe. It is as impossible to get two men to think alike as it was for Charles V to get two clocks to tick alike in the famous experiment he made. Men differ about the simplest and most commonplace things. And yet we are confronted with this remarkable harmony of the Bible. Its authors, as we have seen, were men of the most diverse type. The literary forms in which they expressed themselves were very different,—poetry and prose, the poetry lyric and dramatic; the prose, history, philosophy, and prophecy. And the subjects on which they wrote were also those on which nature and their own thinking would give them the least light. And yet in the whole fifteen hundred years of its composition, the aim of the Book was one, its principles were unchanged, its view of God and man remained the same, and all over the world among the most varied peoples

the effect of reading any part of the Book is always the same. There is nothing like such unity anywhere else. It is not natural. Men could not produce such unity if they set out to do it. They could only approach it. What explanation shall we give? We can best get at it by an illustration.

You go some evening to a musicale. A symphony orchestra is before you. There are forty players, let us say. They are a very varied lot of men, of very diverse temperaments, they come from different homes, and they approach their work in very different moods. The instruments they play are very different; some are of strings, some are reed instruments made of wood, some are of brass, some are of skins stretched tight. Each man has his own strain to play and these strains sound very different when heard separately. But when they are played together the harmony is ravishing. How do you account for the unity of effect? You are in no dilemma about that. You say one mind governed them all. One man wrote the symphony and each of the players gets his directions from the one composer. We cannot think of such unity in result, such harmonious volume of sound without thinking of one master mind as its cause.

My church built a new house of worship not long since. I often went to look at the men in their work of building. There was a small army of them. They were working on every part of the structure. They were very different men. The materials they worked with were very different. There was steel from Pennsylvania mills. There was limestone from Indiana. There was other stone from quarries at Germantown. There was wood from the forests of the northwest. There was such a diversity of materials as forbids mention of the many

kinds. Each man went about his work without paying much heed to most of the other men. And yet out of all that confusion of movement the structure daily grew into finer perfection of beauty and usefulness. And if, as I stood there, you had asked me for an explanation of such harmony of result, I should have pointed you to a man who now and then moved about among the workmen, stopping here and there to look, and now and then calling the attention of some of the men to a sheet he had in his hands. That man was the superintending architect and the sheet to which he referred was the detailed plan of the building, and that plan was the work of the one master mind that controlled everybody who did a stroke of work on that building.

So of the marvellous harmony of the Bible. There is no reasonable explanation of the impressively harmonious work done by these forty or more men, unless we accept the statement that many of them made plainly and repeatedly, that they were inspired and controlled by one master mind, the mind of God Himself. That is a sensible and a satisfying explanation.

The unity of the Bible is all the more remarkable when you remember that its teachings were often at variance with the notions that prevailed among the people with whom some of the authors lived. Men are usually profoundly affected by the ideas of their time. Environment is counted mightier than heredity to-day. Tennyson said, "I am part of all I have met." Ordinarily that is true of men. When Dr. Barnard C. Taylor retired from his place as Professor in Crozer Theological Seminary which he honorably filled for more than forty years he said that he wished he could analyze himself and see just where each part came from. Often we can do something of that sort. We say of one trait

as Spurgeon used to say of his gout, "That came from my grandfather." Of another trait we say, "My father is responsible for that." And we explain another by saying, "I had a friend and I learned that of him." And no doubt the Biblical writers betray many of their life relations by the ideas they express and the way they express them. Yet in the great thing for which God was using them,—to reveal to men His own character, His abhorrence of sin, His grief over their fall, and the method by which they must be redeemed,—the Bible writers were held absolutely true, and they always found themselves in instant revolt against the things which would in any way corrupt their thought.

Some have impressed it upon us that Moses learned much from the Egyptians and that what the Jews have given us they got from Babylonia, and Egypt, and Assyria. Stephen does indeed tell us that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. But one of the main things Moses learned in Egypt was not to do as the Egyptians did. No doubt in Egypt he was in the midst of the greatest civilization of his time, but through what God had taught him he found himself in revolt against it. Turn to the book of Genesis that carries the story of our race back to its beginning and you will find there a view of things that is a flat contradiction of the notions that prevailed among the Egyptians and among the other nations that were neighbours to the Hebrews. Moses shows God creating the sun and moon and stars. Now, you know that the sun and moon and stars were the gods of the nations round about the Jews. But in Moses' view they were simply the creatures of God's hand. The more you read that story and reflect upon it, the more marvellous it will seem to you. All through that first chapter of Genesis Moses is demolishing the

gods of the heathen. With almost every stroke of his pen a god goes down. And if you are familiar with the isms of to-day, and the prevailing false philosophies, you will find that that chapter demolishes them with equal effectiveness. And before the discerning reader gets to the end of that chapter, instead of worshipping any creature he finds himself bowing before the Creator of heaven and earth and all that in them is.

Turn to Leviticus. Many do not like the atmosphere of the book. It is full of blood. There are several good reasons for that, which it would be aside from my purpose here even to allude to. The book is so distasteful to some men who have no insight that they have called the priest of God in it a butcher, and the Lord's altars have been sneered at as shambles. But think of what Moses is doing in that book. When he got his unorganized mass of people out into the wilderness he had to teach them. How should he do it? Remember that they had come from a land where the bull was a god. The Egyptians worshipped cattle. The one time when the Israelites broke away from Moses they set up a calf as their god showing that they had been profoundly influenced by their Egyptian life. But when Moses, the servant of the Lord, arranged his sacrifices, in what did they consist? They were cattle,—the gods of paganism. Every morning and evening in the worship of Jehovah the blood of an Egyptian god was poured out, and the flesh of an Egyptian god burned upon the altar. You see the point of it surely. All the gods of the heathen are offered in sacrifice to Him who alone is God. And so in books that have been spoken of slightingly we find exalted testimony borne to the same great truths that are set forth in the other books of the Bible. And what I want to know is, where Moses got

those ideas that are so different from the prevailing notions of his day, and so in harmony with those of the other writers of the sacred book.

And we have testimony from the Lord Jesus Himself as to the unity of the Bible. He says that the books in it are one in pointing to Him. One great personality dominates the Bible. Does it sound a bit old-fashioned to say that each Book of the Old Testament has Christ as its object and centre? And yet I say just that. Our Lord Himself said that. I know that there are many who do not believe it, and they are men who think they understand the Scriptures, too. But do not be troubled. They are no new species. In the Saviour's time there were two men who thought they knew the Scriptures, but they could not see Christ in them, and the Lord rebuked them for their blindness and said, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." They had a Bible-reading that afternoon conducted by the Lord Himself, and His subject was "Christ in the Old Testament." I should like to have been with them then. On another occasion He said of the Scriptures, "They are they which testify of me." And on another occasion still He said, "All things must be fulfilled which are written in the law, and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning me." That covers all the divisions of the Old Book. It is a unit in its message concerning Christ. We can hear His lips saying, "In the volume of the Book it is written of me." It is. He Himself hath said it. If we are not able to see it we should mourn over our blindness and ask Him to open our understanding, and He will do it, and our

hearts will burn within us while He talks with us by the way and opens unto us the Scriptures.

That the purpose of the New Testament is to present Christ to us we do not need to have demonstrated to us. The purpose of the whole book John gives when he states the purpose of his Gospel as he concludes it, "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."

All that has been said is only a beginning. There are scores of signs of the Book's mysterious unity to which I may not even allude. No matter how these books came together, they are one book. Whatever the principle of selection was, the result is such a volume that you cannot add to it profitably, and you cannot subtract from it without hurt. Men have tried to cut out certain books. But those books are there yet in the Book. Sit down and read them and you will see that they deserve to be there. To take them away would be like severing a limb from the body or putting out an eye. It is a marvellous book, one in its purpose, one in its structure, one in its saving effect on those who read it. Back of its historians, back of its poets, back of its apostles, back of its seers who gave us their uplifting apocalyptic visions, there is one speaker, and that is the living God. The authors of the Book claimed to be the mouthpieces of the Almighty. Their work has proved itself to be God's Word.

There are some who would make a distinction between the words of Christ and the words of the prophets and the apostles. But the Lord Himself makes no such distinction. He places Himself alongside the prophets who spoke before Him and the apostles who spoke after Him. You remember that He said, "The words that I speak

unto you I speak not of myself, but my Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." And again, in His high priestly prayer He says, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them." All of them spoke by the same authority.

It is a wonderful Book! There is none like it. Men have studied it microscopically. They have pulled it to pieces. They have tried to destroy it. But it has gone on ministering to the spiritual life of the centuries. It has shown a power to comfort and console, to strengthen and inspire men, to redeem men from sin and to develop in them Christlike qualities that set it quite apart from the books that men have written. Wonderful Book! Its author is God, its subject is Christ, its object is man's salvation, its end is eternity, its name is the Bible. Wonderful Book! Do you read it? Will you read it as never before? It will make you wise above your fellows, wise unto salvation. Wonderful Book! No wonder men cling to it as worth more than life itself.

"Let all the plans that men devise
Assault that Book with treacherous art;
I'll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Bible to my heart."

IV

CAN WE BELIEVE IN THE VIRGIN BIRTH?

"And the virgin's name was Mary."—LUKE 1:27.

WHEN the Son of God was born into the world He came amid demonstrations of joy such as the world never had witnessed before. The song of the angels in heaven was heard down on earth. God put a new star in the sky as a guide to those who had watched for His coming. The world at large was too dull to realize what was going on. But some perceived it; listened to the wonderful song; saw the shining of that light that never was on land or sea; followed the mysterious star; and knelt at the feet of Him who was to be the world's Saviour. What a wonderful story it is! How poor the world would be without it! And how natural it all seems and most appropriate, when you consider who it was that was born on that night so long ago! Only as you lower your conception of the nature and character of Jesus Christ, do you feel that the wonders attending His birth should in any way be modified. Of course those who believe that Jesus Christ was only a man must have Him born as all the children of men have been born from the beginning of time.

It need not surprise us that there have always been some who looked upon our Lord as only a man. Some who looked upon the miracles He did, and could not deny them yet refused to accept them as proof of His divine power, said that He did them by the power of the devil. There is nothing you can do that will win a favourable judgment from those who deliberately set

themselves against you. Prejudice rules more men than reason does. A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still. Even when evidence is overwhelming and cannot be answered, men will not admit it. Some men are so obstinate and sinful that in such a case they will simply plan to distort or destroy the evidence. Ernst Haeckel, who before his death mourned that he was the only follower of Darwin left, was so determined to demonstrate the theory of evolution that he deliberately made false drawings, and illustrated his book with them to bolster up his theory, that never has been proved, and probably never can be. Men have been known to keep from the eyes of the people evidence which proved something they did not like, or they have even sought to destroy the evidence. We read that after the resurrection of Lazarus some of those who saw him sitting at a feast with the Lord who had raised him from the dead, were so determined that men should not believe that Jesus had miraculous power that they plotted to destroy all evidence of it. John tells us that "the chief priests consulted together that they might put Lazarus also to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." It is the most frightful use one can make of his mind, to use it to get rid of evidence of a truth that you do not wish to believe. The New Testament would seem to teach that that is the sin against the Holy Ghost,—to look on white and declare that it is black; to look on the works of Jesus Christ, and declare that they are done by the power of the devil; to listen to the wonderful story of the Saviour's life and say that it is unbelievable; to have brought before us the evidence of His divine character and to say in the face of all the evidence, "It is nothing. He was only a man;" to look on

the wonders of His entrance into the world, and to pooh-pooh it and calumniate Him and reduce His birth to dreary commonplace.

For hundreds of years the Christian Church has said reverently the words of the oldest of our creeds, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." But we are told by many to-day that we must omit this statement of the supernatural birth of our Lord. To be sure it is no new thing for this doctrine to be attacked. While it is true that, except for the Ebionites and some of the Gnostics, every body of Christians that ever has existed has received the Virgin Birth as part of its faith, no doctrine has been more virulently and more persistently attacked than this. The authenticity and trustworthiness of Luke's Gospel have been established as much as anything in this world can be by the work of patient British scholars, and at least two distinguished scholars in Germany who have been far from orthodox in their faith, have attested the results, and have expressed astonishment that any one should doubt that Luke wrote both the Gospel and the Acts, the latter at the end of Paul's imprisonment in Rome, and the Gospel at an earlier date. That means that Luke's Gospel was written some years before A. D. 66, and yet it contains one of our clearest statements of the Virgin Birth. Even so radical a critic as Johannes Weiss admitted that the first and second chapters of Luke may have circulated in the Jewish Christian communities of Judea "in the sixties." We can easily then accept the conclusion of Professor Theodor Zahn of Erlangen that the Virgin Birth "has been an element of the creed as far as we can trace it back, and if Ignatius can be taken

as a witness of a baptismal creed springing from early in Apostolic times, certainly in that creed the name of the Virgin Mary already had its place. . . . The theory of an original Christianity without the belief in Jesus the Son of God, born of the virgin, is a fiction." And yet for all its historic foundations would seem so secure, in every age there have been some who have hated the Christian religion and have wished to annihilate it, have sneered at and tried to discredit this doctrine. But heretofore the attacks upon it have been made by the enemies of Christianity. To-day we are astounded to find the same sort of attacks that were made by Cerinthus, and Celsus, by Voltaire, and Tom Paine, made by men who stand in Christian pulpits and are seated in chairs in theological seminaries, who have formally given assent to Christian creeds which plainly include the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, and who are supported by money provided by people who are loyal to Scriptural teaching and have wished to perpetuate it. This is the anomalous situation that confronts us to-day.

Several times during the last quarter of the nineteenth century the controversy over the Virgin Birth prevailed among the scholars of Germany until Great Britain and America were involved in it. In 1892 Germany was greatly stirred by the refusal of a preacher and pastor named Schrempf to use the Apostles' Creed in the church ritual because he disbelieved in the Virgin Birth and some other teachings of that creed. He was at least more honest than some are to-day who go on reciting the creed in public while privately disavowing their belief in it, and indeed now and then intimating in public that the old faith is quite untenable. Schrempf was deposed from his office, but a great controversy arose and has continued to this day with increasing violence not

only over the Virgin Birth but about everything else in our Lord that sets Him apart from the rest of humanity. For you know you cannot separate the Virgin Birth from the other wonders of His life and death. They stand or fall together inevitably. The man who throws the supernatural birth overboard throws with it all the miracles Christ wrought, all thought of His sinlessness, all idea that there is any saving efficacy in His death, all faith in His resurrection, and of course regards as utter nonsense all teaching that He will come back again. Their antipathy to the Virgin Birth is simply a piece of their sworn enmity to everything supernatural. And so when they come to the study of documents that teach these things they come with their knives out. When they come upon anything that does not agree with their preconceived notion that there is nothing beyond what we see to be the ordinary course of nature, they simply throw it aside as unbelievable. Professor George Burman Foster, who was for so long a time professor of the philosophy of religion in the University of Chicago, said of the miracles of Jesus Christ, "An intelligent man who now affirms his faith in such stories as actual facts can hardly know what intellectual honesty is." The conceit of it! That is the mildest comment one can make on such a judgment as that. Professor Foster came to the conclusion that there is no manifestation of the supernatural in man's life and therefore everything that did not agree with that notion of his must be ruled out, and any man who does not accept his theory that limits the power of God in His own universe is not an honest man intellectually. The conceit of pronouncing such a judgment is colossal.

Minot Savage says in his little book "Talks About Jesus," "Let us look at the tales that the gospel nar-

rators tell. We can dispose of John in a word. If you take the Gospel of John and read it through carefully with the one thought in mind you will find that throughout its pages Jesus is not treated as a man." We are entirely ready to admit that. John did not look upon the Son of God merely as a man. He said distinctly ages before Dr. Savage was born that he wrote his Gospel that men might see that Jesus Christ was more than a man. The world did not have to wait for a person of Dr. Savage's rare acumen to disclose it to them that John did not write of Jesus as though He was a man merely. John himself said in the Gospel, "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." It is singular that Dr. Savage did not remember that John said that, but it is gratifying that he clearly perceived that that was John's purpose in writing his Gospel. But then Dr. Savage calmly says that because John believed that Jesus Christ was more than a man, we must throw his Gospel aside. The conceit of it! To set up his own theory of the person of Christ, and that, a theory that robs Christ of all His glory and tramples under foot the claims He made for Himself and that sets at nought the judgment of the ages, and then insist that all shall accept his dicta! What amazing conceit this is to be sure!

Two young men recently came out of a well-known theological seminary in New York City. They apparently were just coming from a classroom. They were earnestly talking together. It may fairly be assumed that they were thinking of the lesson of the hour and echoing the teaching of the classroom they just had left. I could not help overhearing them. One of them said to the other, "Yes, He was a great prophet, but a

greater than He will arise some day." They were talking about Jesus Christ. And the conclusion they had been led to by the lesson of that hour was precisely what Theodore Parker said about Jesus Christ. But who gave them this rare power of estimating the past and prophesying about the future? One who stood in a better place for knowing about Jesus Christ than they, said, "In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Could a greater one than that arise? Another who knew our Lord well said, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." Can any one in the future outdo that? And these men in addition to their better opportunities to know the character of Jesus Christ were, we believe, specially inspired of God to speak of Him. But their testimony is ruthlessly thrown aside as of no account because it does not agree with the prejudices of those men who by their deliberate choice are disbelievers in the supernatural. One is abundantly justified in speaking of the judgments of such men slightingly and of showing contempt for their scholarship. The true scholar has profound respect for facts. The true man of science has profound respect for facts. They ascertain their facts first, and form their theory afterwards. That is not scholarship that forms its theory first and then twists the facts into conformity with that theory, and if they are stubborn facts and will not be twisted throws them away declaring that they are not facts.

Dr. Charles E. Jefferson in speaking of Jesus Christ and the mystery of His personality, says that we cannot help asking as they of old did "What manner of man is this?" And then he goes on to say, "The simplest of all solutions is to deny that Jesus was more than man.

If He says He was, He is mistaken. If John says He was, John errs. If Paul says He was, Paul blunders. If the Church thinks He was, it thinks so because the Church is superstitious. That was the solution offered by the Ebionites in the first century, and that in substance is the solution offered by many to-day. 'Do the Gospels say that Jesus was miraculously conceived,—cut that out, it is a myth. Do they say He arose from the dead, —cut it out, it is a legend. Do they say He worked miracles,—cut it out, it is an idle tale. Do they say He claimed to have existed before His birth,—cut it out, He probably never said it, and if He did He meant that He preëxisted only in the mind of God. Hallucinations in great men are common.' That is one solution. It is the easiest of all." Those are sane words, well worth pondering. And then Dr. Jefferson goes on to say, "It requires no extra brain power to use a pair of scissors, and to reach the conclusion that Jesus was only a man all one needs is a pair of scissors. The substitution of a pair of shears for vigorous thought has often been made with great éclat, and with such consummate art as to blind ordinary mortals to the nature of the transaction. But the knack of using scissors ought not to be counted as conclusive evidence of an extraordinary endowment of brain power. We ought not to be hoodwinked by the sleek insinuation that those who deny the divinity of Jesus are thinkers above all others, far in advance of this ignorant and superstitious age. The simple fact is that the humanitarian solution is no solution at all. It is a sly evasion of the problem. When asked, 'What manner of man is this?' the humanitarians blot out more than half of the New Testament, and build their answer on the flimsy fragment that remains."

Contrary to my habit, I have made this long quotation, that you may see that one need not feel himself alone in looking with contempt on so-called scholarship that sneers at those who make room for God to manifest Himself to His creatures in the midst of His own world. And once admit that God can manifest Himself in human life, and all objections to the Virgin Birth, to the inspiration of the Scriptures, to the beneficent miracles that Jesus Christ wrought, and to the resurrection of the Saviour vanish at once. Professor Huxley was very far from being in agreement with orthodox Christianity but he was a true man of science and he said in his later years that it was unscientific to say that anything was impossible. His method was to ascertain the facts first and then to form your theory.

Now what are the facts that support our belief in the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ? In the nature of the case direct evidence of it cannot be given by a multitude of witnesses as in the resurrection. Direct testimony could be given by only two witnesses, Joseph and Mary, and oddly enough it is their testimony that we have. The two men who tell us the story of the nativity are Matthew and Luke. Matthew was one of our Lord's intimate followers. Luke is accounted one of the most trustworthy of ancient historians, very painstaking, and well acquainted with many of those who personally knew Christ. He was also the associate of the greatest apostle of Jesus Christ. Both of these men were of the sort who would rather die than lie. So far as I know nobody of any account denies that the stories of Matthew and Luke are independent of each other. That is, nobody claims that Luke got his story from Matthew or that Matthew borrowed his story from Luke. Indeed the critics, some of them, say that the stories contradict one

another, so far are they from having one source. If you read the stories you will see that Matthew tells his story from the point of view of Joseph. He tells of Joseph's consternation when he discovered his wife's condition; his decision to put her away quietly; of the dreams in which God reassured him and told him what to do; of the way in which he became the protector of the mother and the child; of the dangers which threatened them, and of all the steps that Joseph took to effect their escape, their return, and their settlement in Nazareth. We hear the story just as it fell from Joseph's own lips. It is Joseph's story that none but he could tell.

Luke tells the story from Mary's point of view. He narrates the annunciation by the angel of the fact that she was to be the Lord's mother, and delicately recounts all her fears and hopes on account of it. He gives also the song of praise that Mary sang that she was so honoured of God as to be made the mother of His Son. It is without doubt Mary's story as no one else could tell it. We may well say with Bishop Gore, "It is quite impossible to doubt that we have in these two narratives, the witness of Mary and the witness of Joseph."

That these two Gospels bearing their names were written by Matthew and Luke is not disputed by any one whose opinion is worth while. Professor Harnack of Berlin has made emphatic announcement of the genuineness of Luke's Gospel. There has recently been raised some question as to the original language in which Matthew was written, and there have been some intimations that the Gospel we have is simply based on an earlier Gospel that came from Matthew's hand. But the early Church accepted the Gospel as we have it as Matthew's Gospel. So that we need have no concern as to its genuineness.

The critics of the story make much of the fact that Mark says nothing about the Virgin Birth of Christ, and therefore they assume that Mark believed His birth was ordinary and natural. That is a great assumption. Mark not only says nothing about the manner of the Saviour's birth, but says nothing about His being born at all, and nothing about His early years. Shall we therefore conclude that Mark did not believe Jesus was born into the world and did not appear at all until He began His ministry? If we are to argue from silence why not say that Mark did not believe Joseph could have been the father of Jesus since nowhere in his Gospel does he even mention his name. The argument from silence is of very little weight. Those who are accustomed to historical research feel that there is no argument so untrustworthy. The fact is that Mark begins his story with the ministry of Christ and leaves the birth and childhood to be told by others. But he begins the story he tells with the unmistakable announcement that it is "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, THE SON OF GOD." It is said also that John says nothing of a miraculous birth. Men who ordinarily would not take John's testimony about anything make great use of his silence here. But John does tell of Christ's preexistence, and in such a way that Dr. William N. Clarke says that it well accords with the idea of a miraculous birth. And we must remember that John says, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." John makes Christ say to the Jews, "You are from beneath; I am from above." And five times in speaking of Jesus, four times in his Gospel, and once in his first epistle, John uses that tremendously significant phrase "the only begotten Son of God." This alone is conclusive. Dr. Robert E. Speer puts the case fairly when he says,

"Instead of saying 'The story is found in only two Gospels' it would be more fitting to say that 'All the Gospels which deal with Jesus' childhood tell of the Virgin Birth.' "

It is said also that Paul does not speak of the Virgin Birth in his epistles. But Paul does speak of Christ as "the second man from heaven." And he does say in a very significant way that Jesus Christ was "born of a woman, born under the law" alluding to His human motherhood, but leaving room for the common belief that He had no human father. It was Paul, too, who spoke of the preëxistence of Christ, saying that "he was in the form of God, but emptied himself" to dwell with us. Paul says that "though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor." Again and again Paul alludes to Christ's preëxistence before He came to this world, so that all that he says is in agreement with the fact of the Virgin Birth and out of agreement with ordinary birth. And then too it hardly can be that Paul was ignorant of the Virgin Birth since Luke who told the story so fascinatingly was his intimate friend and companion. The French skeptic Ernst Renan has called the Gospel of Luke the most beautiful book in the world, and the story of our Lord's nativity is one of the most beautiful parts of this very beautiful book.

All the manuscripts of the Gospels that are known, with the exception of a Syriac version recently found, and a mutilated copy of Matthew in the possession of the Ebionites, have the story of the supernatural birth of the Saviour. There are hundreds of these manuscripts, some of them very old and in different languages, but these narratives of the Virgin Birth are found in them all. Dr. W. N. Clarke mentions that the earliest known fragment of the Gospels, recently found

in Egypt, is also a witness in favour of the miraculous birth of Christ. The notion that the birth narratives are a later growth, and inserted in the Gospels at a late date, is nothing but a notion and has absolutely nothing to support it.

Some of the critics who reject the stories that Matthew and Luke tell of the birth of Christ profess to find a parallel between them and the birth of some of the heroes of Greek and Roman and Oriental history. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick did this in a much talked about sermon of his. He said flatly "the Virgin Birth is not to be accepted as an historic fact," which is a very superficial judgment. He compares the chaste story of the birth of Christ with the vile story of Apollo, and the birth of Augustus Cæsar. The ordinary listener in a congregation would not know what that story is. But Dr. Fosdick and others who make that comparison know. It would seem as though it would scorch their lips to institute a comparison between the vile stories that the Greeks and Romans told of the commerce that their gods had with humanity and the sublime narratives in which Matthew and Luke tell of the birth of the Son of God. There is absolutely nothing in common between those unclean, grotesque inventions of men and the clean, sweet story of the Gospels. Indeed there is no case in ethnic literature of a birth from a pure virgin. And scholars are agreed that the Jews viewed with abhorrence the stories of the birth of pagan heroes as a result of the lustful mingling of their gods with their earthly amours, and the New Testament narratives have no trace of a foreign origin, but in their style of writing and the language used are more intensely Jewish than any other part of the Gospels. Dr. Fairbairn says of the New Testament account of the Saviour's birth, "The whole story is as

pure as the mountain air. There is nothing whatever of the atmosphere of legend about it. It has to be remembered also that the history belongs to Jewish soil, upon which pagan myths never were allowed to flourish." Listen to these lofty words in which according to Luke the angel Gabriel told Mary she was to be the Lord's mother, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." The man whose soul does not glow with rapture and become mute with reverence when he hears those words is lacking in spiritual vitality. Luke has told his story in language so exquisitely beautiful, and in a manner so full of heavenly purity and grace that it has captivated the heart of the world.

Much might be made of the argument from prophecy. Isaiah's great prediction that a virgin should be the mother of Israel's Messiah is notable, though the Jews never seem to have felt its significance. It is likely that the Jews expected their Messiah to come by ordinary birth. That is important to remember. For if the Jews had no expectation that their Messiah should have a miraculous birth, the story was not invented from a desire to satisfy Jewish expectations, as some have intimated it was. But the prophecy of Isaiah is not the most notable prophecy of the one-sided human birth of our Lord. God said to the serpent who beguiled Eve in the garden, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." That is a very strange way of putting the prediction that has in it an implicit promise of redemption. How did it come that God said so explicitly that the victory of re-

demption should be achieved by the seed of the woman and does not allude to the man? It is fair to say that God knew what He would do and He exactly expressed His purpose in His promise. Have you a better explanation than that? It was the woman through whom sin entered the world and it was through woman the Redeemer would come. I cannot believe that the words of Genesis are the result of accident. God spoke them. And in the miraculous birth of Christ we find the satisfactory explanation of those strange words spoken at the beginning of the race's history.

But the best proof of the credibility of the wonderful story of Christ's birth is the wonderful life He lived. If He had turned out to be nothing but a commonplace ordinary man we could not have believed that He had had an extraordinary birth. But the mystery of His birth is in full agreement with the mystery of His life. As Joseph Parker said in his Ecce Deus, "A common man could not be tolerated after so uncommon a beginning." If Christ was sinless, and He was, for no one has yet convicted Him of sin; if He stood among men in the likeness of God; if John could tell us truly that His disciples perceived in Him the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; if Jesus Christ was as John and Paul affirmed and His Church has ever believed, the Son of God made flesh, filled with all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, the second Adam made the new head of the race to redeem it; a miracle might reasonably be expected when He was born into the world. It is a most singular thing that an age that makes so much of heredity as ours does, declaring that children have the features, repeat the traits and duplicate the character of their parents, should not be able to see the necessity of a greater than human parentage for

this being whom all ages have declared to be both the Son of Man and the Son of God. For the history of the world testifies to His divinity and thus demonstrates the appropriateness of an extraordinary birth. Even if He were only the God-sent teacher of all the ages, no one else is within sight of Him. As Dr. William N. Clarke has said, "No teacher has uttered so little that is merely temporary, and so much that is eternal and abiding as He." And as Redeemer of course, He is in a class utterly by Himself. No one else could by any stretch of language be spoken of as the Redeemer of men. History shows us that there is none other like Him; that in character He is unapproached and unapproachable, from the beginning of the world to the end of the world; that He stands alone, unique, supreme, without a peer, in what He was and what He has done for humanity. It is easy to believe that at the birth of such a one as He the heavens would open to the view of earth, and the angelic throng should come down and chant their celestial songs to men. It is easy to believe that such a one as He should come into the world in an extraordinary way, and be heralded by extraordinary signs.

Well but, you say, is the matter of the Virgin Birth an important thing? Those who became His followers during His ministry knew nothing of it and yet they were faithful and true disciples. Even if they knew about it John and Paul did not emphasize it in their preaching. And there are many among us who cannot believe the doctrine, who yet seem to be sincere Christian men. Is it important whether we believe it or not? The truthfulness of Scripture is important certainly. Two of the Gospels directly declare the Virgin Birth. Most of the rest of the book implies it. If those statements and implications are false, where does it leave us?

If they are not to be believed as to how Jesus Christ came into the world, can we believe anything they say? The question is inevitable, and it leaves us in a sorry plight.

And if a man rejects the Virgin Birth it means that he has a low conception of the character of Jesus. He may avoid the direct confession of it. He may say that he fully believes that Jesus Christ is divine, but you will find out that he has mental reservations. He does not accept fully and unreservedly the conception of Christ presented by the whole of the New Testament. He will set the conception of Christ given in the Gospels over against that of the Epistles, and somehow twist these parts of the Book into imaginary contradiction of one another. He will quibble about the meaning of divinity and deity, and so on so that you will be in doubt as to where he stands. But if a man says frankly that he believes in the Virgin Birth, that the mother of Jesus Christ was the Virgin Mary and He had no human father, that He was the only begotten Son of God, you know very well where he stands on all the doctrines of grace as they are given in the New Testament.

Is the doctrine of any value in our daily lives? Much every way. If God really came into this world in the person of His Son, and lived our life, and shared our experiences, and was tried in all points like as we are, that makes my whole view of the world different from what it could be if Jesus Christ was after all only one of the sons of men, and His experiences had no more relation to mine than the experiences of any other man. Believing in the Virgin Birth I can go about with my head lifted up with joy at the thought that God really did visit this sin-struck world of ours. The wondrous things that are told us about the advent of His Son are a delight to

think upon, and though they may be a mystery they are not a myth but a blessed reality. The Son of God though He was in humiliation while here yet came with the signs of His heavenly origin about Him. Pity the men who do not rejoice in the fullness of the Gospel. Pity those who try to reduce the Son of God incarnate to the level of common humanity. Pity those who would take all the wonder out of life and reduce God's world to a mere mechanism, and who would make it impossible long to believe in God as a Father since He would be unable to help us in the world that He Himself created.

On one occasion Henry Acland, a friend of Michael Faraday, found the great chemist and natural philosopher in tears with his head bowed over an open Bible. "I fear you are feeling worse," Acland said. "No," said Faraday, " it is not that. But why, oh why, will not men believe the blessed truths here revealed to them?" It is reason for tears. Pity such men you who believe and are happy in your faith in the Son of God. Pity them and pray for them. And so live before them that your life will help them to believe that God was born into the world nineteen hundred years ago in the person of His Son, and that He is still in the world in His disciples.

V

CAN WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD?

"He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."—MATTHEW 16:15, 16.

THE question as to what we think of Christ is fundamental to all our life. On the way we answer it depends our well being for this world and the next. This is not one of those questions, like "Are the other worlds inhabited?" which we can answer in any way at all and have things go on just the same with us. If we can answer it aright as when Christ first asked it, our Christian faith will stand. If we answer it in any other way Christianity is doomed to a speedy failure. We are not asking this question speculatively and out of curiosity, but we are pressed to it by necessity. Not only every age but every person must answer this question for himself.

There never was such deep interest in the person of Christ as there is to-day. Voltaire thought that Christianity had so insubstantial a basis that he threatened single-handed to pull it down, but though Voltaire has been dead nearly a hundred and fifty years, just as surely as any body of Christian preachers discusses any point of the Apostles' Creed with a possibility of a division on it the newspapers still think it of sufficient popular interest to give it as much space as they would the latest piece of scandal or a sensational prize fight. More than twenty-five years ago Hall Caine, who was

then the most popular and the most capable of English novelists, said that he hoped soon to write a life of Jesus Christ. Though he is past seventy years old he recently declared that he still has that purpose in mind. And he has given as his reason for it that Jesus Christ is the one person in whom everybody is interested. Professor Benjamin Jowett of Balliol College, in Oxford, who made Plato accessible to English readers, said that that work of his was but a preparation for one still greater, and then he said that he intended to make a study of the life of Christ and to answer the question that Christ asked about Himself on the hillside near Cæsarea Philippi nearly nineteen hundred years ago. That greater work, alas, never was finished. While he was busy upon it Professor Jowett passed away. Adolph Harnack is no doubt the greatest historian of the Christian Church who has arisen in the last fifty years. We are told that his classroom in Berlin always was crowded when he lectured. Not only students, whose interest might be assumed, but bankers, merchants, statesmen, stood about the wall to listen whenever it was announced he would lecture. And yet Harnack had but one theme, —Jesus Christ, the times in which He lived, and the influence He had exerted upon humanity. He began his book on *The Beginnings of Christianity* by quoting John Stuart Mill's remark that men cannot be too often reminded that a man named Socrates once lived among them. Harnack assents to that but he says that it is vastly more important that they be reminded that a man called Jesus Christ once stood among them. Then he proceeds to show that Christ's coming into the world changed the intellectual and moral landscape of the world, and gave to men a new map of the soul. From the time when Jesus Christ asked His disciples

this question about Himself recorded in the text He has been the most interesting personality in the world, and He has never been more highly esteemed than He is to-day. We may fairly say that men are practically unanimous now in acknowledging the matchless beauty of Christ's character and the matchless charm of Christ's teaching. The man who feels no interest in Christ is not up to date. He has lagged behind thinking men.

When Jesus Christ asked that question about Himself there were only two distinct opinions about Him. The disciples reported that the people were saying that He was one of the old prophets come back; that is He was a man, one of the greatest of men, greater than any other man of that time, so great that He must have been imported into that time from some other and better age, but still He was only a man. They thought Him a man like Jeremiah who had brought a message from the other world, but still He was only a man. But when Jesus Christ asked that little group of men who had lived with Him and who knew Him better than anybody else in that day what they thought of Him, the one who was always the spokesman for the rest said promptly: "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." And from that day to this there have been only those two opinions about Him. It may seem as though there has been a great variety of opinions, but really all the different views that men have held about Christ are easily reducible to these two. One side says, "He was a man, a very great man, a very good man, greater and better than any other man the world has known, greater and better perhaps than any other man the world ever will know, but still He was only a man." The other side says: "He was more than man; He was the Son of God; the king of Israel; God manifest in the flesh; unapproached

from the beginning of the world; unapproachable to the end of the world; Immanuel; God with us." The one side while expressing unstinted admiration for Jesus, yet have a very inadequate conception of His character. The other side give Him more than admiration; they give Him worship. Charles Lamb had both classes in mind when he said: "If Shakespeare should come into this room where we are, we should stand to greet him. If Jesus Christ should come in we should fall on our knees before Him."

To be sure there is a great difference between men simply as men. That phrase "only a man" may describe one who is worthy of all the reverence we can command. There are men and men. Some men seem below the brutes; others seem close to the angels. One word includes them all. The one word includes John Wilkes Booth who is beyond any words of detestation that we can command; and it includes Abraham Lincoln who in a half century of time is accounted by most of the world to be beyond any words of praise. The same word includes Voltaire whose stationery is said to have borne the words "Crush the wretch," referring to Jesus Christ, and it includes also such a man as John Wesley, who tirelessly roamed over England and America that he might bring the light of hope and peace into the lives of people who were little cared for by the rest of the world. It includes on the one hand Judas Iscariot, who sold his Lord for the price of a common slave, and on the other hand such a man as Paul who so loved his Lord that he had no desire except to please Him. There is an unspeakable difference between men in moral stature and yet the difference between the best of men and Jesus Christ is so immeasurable that compared with Him all who are merely men are on the same level. The

men who know Jesus Christ best perceive something in Him that puts a hush into their tones and reverence into their attitude when He approaches.

No doubt the first thing to be done in reaching a conviction about Jesus Christ is to learn what He said of Himself. And no one can read the words of Jesus Christ without seeing that He made tremendous claims for Himself. He separated Himself from all other men by such a challenge as this,—"Which of you convinceth me of sin?" and by such a declaration as this: "I am from above; you are from beneath." He claimed authority over men. Without any hesitation He declared that men ought to render Him obedience. He said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." And again He said, "Why call ye me Lord, and do not the things which I say?" And yet while He claimed such absolute authority He professed to be meek and lowly in heart. But if He had no rightful authority over men He was not only not meek and lowly in heart but He was the most arrant egotist the world has ever known.

He set Himself above everything that the Jews regarded as sacred. He put Himself above the Bible. The Scriptures were reverenced then as no one reverences them now. They were studied with miscroscopic care. Every bit of every letter, the dot over an I and the crossing of a T were looked upon as divinely inspired. Some one has said and justly said that even the fly specks on the Scriptural documents were regarded with reverence. We hardly can conceive how holy the Scriptures were to the ancient Jew. And yet again and again Jesus Christ quoted from those Scriptures and said, "It is written thus and so, but I say unto you." We cannot imagine how such words would strike the ears of the

devout people of His time. And so we read that the people were astonished at His teaching because He taught them as one who had authority in Himself, and not as the Scribes who taught by quotation from other authorities. No Puritan ever reverenced the Sabbath day as the Jews of Christ's time did, but He said, "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." He declared Himself greater than the greatest men of the Bible. He put Himself above Abraham. "Before Abraham was I am," were His words. Abraham had been dead eighteen hundred years, but He declared that He existed before that. He set Himself above Solomon. "A greater than Solomon is here," He said to the astonished multitude. He said that David, the idol of the nation, called Him Lord. He declared that the prerogatives of God Himself belonged to Him. He said that by and by He would be the judge of all men. "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works," and then He declares that He will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." He said that He was so identified with God the Father that any one who had seen Him had seen the Father. He did not stop short of saying that men should worship Him, "All men should honour the Son even as also they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father." He claimed for Himself God's right to forgive sin, "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin." He said that men could come to God only through Him, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "No man knoweth the Father but the Son and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him." He said that in Him alone men could find satisfaction, "I am the way, the truth and the life." "He that eateth of this bread shall

live forever." "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." "I am the resurrection and the life, whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." "Come unto me and I will give you rest." "I am the door; by me, if any man shall enter in, he shall be saved." He told men to pray in His name, "If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it." He claimed to be omnipotent, "All power is given me in heaven and on earth." He said that He was omnipresent, "Wheresoever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them," and again, "Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world."

Those are very great claims surely. Indeed there is absolutely nothing beyond them to which He could lay claim. The Jews were entirely right when they charged that He made Himself equal with God. And if what He said was not true the Jews were entirely right in putting Him to death. In doing that they were simply doing what the law that God gave them commanded them to do. Frankly I do not see how men can express admiration for Jesus Christ as the purest, wisest and best of men, and stop with that.

Richard Fuller was right when he said that either Jesus Christ was God's Son or He was a liar and an impostor. He was in the pulpit when he said that. He was preaching on the deity of Christ. In the midst of his sermon he suddenly stopped and looked up to heaven for a moment and said very solemnly, "Oh, Saviour, forgive me if in order to expose the impiety which seeks to tarnish Thy name, I stain my lips with language which my soul abhors." And then looking at the people he said: "If Jesus Christ was only a mortal, He was not the purest and best, but He was the worst of men; He was the most presumptuous of impostors; He was a sys-

tematic blasphemer; and as God has made blasphemy a capital crime, the Jews did right to condemn Him and crucify Him." Richard Fuller was right. There is no escape from his conclusion. Jesus Christ made such exalted claims for Himself that if they were not true, I have no respect for Him. If He was not the Son of God in such a sense as no one else is, He was the most colossal impostor the world has known. There are some men in our pulpits to-day and teaching in our schools, who boast that they are progressive thinkers and declare that their theology is "advanced," and yet they speak of Jesus Christ as though He were only a man. Why should they call themselves "progressive," when they have no more insight into the character of Jesus Christ than the rulers who rejected Him nineteen hundred years ago, or than the rabble that hooted at Him as He hung on the cross. They believed that He was only a man. These men of whom I speak believe no more.

Richard Watson Gilder, gentle soul, one time editor of *The Century Magazine*, wrote:

> "If Jesus Christ is a man,
> And only a man, I say
> That of all mankind I will cleave to Him,
> And to Him I will cleave alway."

A beautiful spirit of devotion breathes in these lines, and I can conceive that a man who had heard Christ speak, say in giving the Sermon on the Mount, and was bewildered about Him might say that. I can see how a man who has not read the New Testament might hold to such ideas. But having read my New Testament and knowing well what Jesus Christ claimed for Himself, I confess I cannot say that. If Jesus Christ is only a man, His testimony concerning Himself is not true, and

I must have a more trustworthy guide and helper than He is. But Mr. Gilder goes on to say,

> "If Jesus Christ is a God,
> And the only God, I swear,
> I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
> The earth, the sea, and the air."

Those words are satisfying to all who know and love the Saviour.

Add to the claims that Jesus Christ made for Himself the testimony of those who stood nearest to Him. They not only understood clearly what He said about Himself, but they expressly acknowledged the truth of His claims. Peter said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Thomas fell at His feet and said: "My Lord and my God." John said as he closed his Gospel: "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Paul says that "Every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father," and that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of those in heaven and those in earth." That is, everybody in heaven as well as everybody on earth must fall on his knees in worship of Jesus Christ. The prophets and patriarchs will fall on their knees, the apostles and the martyrs on their knees, the angels and archangels on their knees! Before whom? A man only? No, no, that cannot be. Only God can receive such homage as that. And when John got a glimpse of what was going on in heaven he found that what Paul anticipated was true. He saw all heaven doing honour to Jesus Christ and singing His praises. Countless multitudes were there, "a multitude that no man could number," all worshipping Him whom some to-day call only a man.

And the whole course of human history since Christ

came into the world has proved the truth of His claims. Gamaliel was right when he said, "If this counsel or this work be of men it will come to naught; but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it." And now for nineteen hundred years the claims of Jesus Christ have been before the world. Sect after sect has arisen that has looked on Jesus Christ as a leader and a teacher, a good and great man, but only a man. And those sects have never gained any great following. Take the most familiar example. About a hundred years ago the Congregationalists of New England split into two parts. One part became Unitarian; the other still worshipped Jesus Christ as Lord and loved Him as Saviour. The Unitarians had most of the wealth and learning. They kept the meeting-houses and the church endowments. They had such leaders as William E. Channing, Theodore Parker, and James Freeman Clarke. They were supported by such brilliant literary men as Emerson, and Longfellow, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. One is not surprised that they expected to win the people of this free land to their free churches, as they called them. But they did not. They have not grown greatly in the century of their existence. The Congregationalists who have held true to our Lord's deity have grown to be a great army of nearly 900,000 people, and those who held Jesus Christ to be merely a man are still only a little company of slightly over a hundred thousand. Unitarians have in their Sunday Schools only 20,515 pupils, while the Congregationalists have an enrollment in their Sunday Schools of 787,564. Even in Boston the Unitarians have stood still. They do everywhere. While the Baptists and the Methodists, the Presbyterians and others who have held to the simplicity of the Gospel message that makes Jesus Christ all in all, have grown

to a combined army of over twenty millions in the United States alone. Reviewing the testimony of history, then, we may say that nineteen centuries have passed away since Christ ascended into heaven, and all of them have put a crown on the head of our Lord, and have bowed the knee to Him.

Many of those who have tried most strenuously to put aside the claims of Christ have ended by practically acknowledging them. David Friedrich Strauss, the unbelieving German, did his best to reduce Jesus Christ to the level of other men, and declared the stories about His work to be nothing but myths. But when he had done all that he could, he declared "Christ remains the highest model of religion within reach of our thought and no perfect piety is possible without His presence in our heart." William Lecky, the unbelieving Englishman, was an avowed rationalist, and yet in his *History of European Morals,* he says: "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which through all the changes of nineteen hundred years has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may truly be said that the simple record of those three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists." Ernst Renan, the unbelieving Frenchman, after doing his utmost to distort the facts of Christ's life, burst out into an almost Christian rhapsody, and said, "Whatsoever be the surprises of the future Jesus never will be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceas-

ing; His story will call forth tears without end. His sufferings will melt the noblest hearts. All ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus."

At the beginning of His life wise men came from the East seeking the infant Christ. At the end of His life some Greeks came from the West saying, "We would see Jesus." And ever since from the north, and the south, and the east, and the west, men have been making their way to Jesus Christ, and finding in Him all that their hearts need. He is the dream of prophets, the theme of poets, the ideal of philosophers, the inspiration of artists, the help and comfort of needy men and women. There is nothing that suggests a parallel to Him anywhere. Nowhere is there a duplicate of His character. He stands absolutely alone in His divine perfections. Never man spake like this man, and never man lived like Him. His purity is spotless; His gentleness is ineffable; His power to save is undeniable; His glory is as far beyond the glory of all others as the sun is superior to the mingled light of all the stars that fade away when the king of day appears.

The validity of the claims of Jesus Christ is still being demonstrated. Wherever His messengers have gone carrying the good news about the Saviour men have yielded to His power. One morning the disciples came to Jesus saying, "Master, all men seek thee." That soon will be true of all the world. Soon we shall be able to look up gratefully to heaven and say: "Dear Lord, all men seek Thee." Japan is turning to Christ to-day. That nation that once required all who stepped from a vessel to her shores to trample the cross of Christ under foot is now lifting the cross on high. China is now awaking from the sleep of centuries. The old Empress

had the New Testament read in the schools before the old order passed away, and it may be said that the Chinese would read it more if Americans read it more. We hear now of a Christian General in the Chinese army with his men trained to Christian service. And long ago the Chinese people added a long list to the roll of those who were willing to suffer death and shame for Jesus' sake. India is multiplying converts, and really India is held in the British Empire by her deepening faith in Jesus Christ. Africa, dark too long, is stretching out her hands toward the light that is in Christ. Already all over the world our Lord is the centre of adoring millions, and the joy of unnumbered hearts. Each year more men acknowledge that He is the only hope of this world for which He shed His precious, redeeming blood. The day is not far distant when Christ's claims will be fully vindicated and the great prophecy be fulfilled that says He shall be supreme from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.

But the absolutely conclusive evidence of the deity of Christ for each one of us is found in the renewing of our own hearts. There is no more positive proof than experience furnishes. That plain man was entirely right, who when he was asked what proof he had that Jesus Christ was divine said promptly: "Bless your heart He saved my soul!" There is no other means that men know anything about by which the drunkard can be made sober, the debauchee can be made pure, the liar be made truthful. The power of Jesus Christ can do that, we know. Each one of us whose heart has been made new by divine grace has within himself the witness of the Spirit that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

There is a tale which the ancient Greeks used to tell of Jupiter having a golden chain which at any time he

could let down from heaven and by it draw the earth and all its people to himself. What the ancient pagan saw dimly we see clearly. Jesus Christ is the golden chain let down from heaven once for all, by which God is drawing the world to Himself. There is in Jesus Christ a sweet loveliness, an enticing gentleness, a divine graciousness, that few men are able to resist if they will but look at them. To be able to resist the influence of Jesus Christ you must get away from His presence; and you must stop your ears to His words; you must shun the company of His people; you must take yourself away from all those who in any way have felt His power. So long as you listen to their testimony you cannot but believe.

Take the testimony of beings animate and things inanimate that have come under His power. Ask them, as Christ asked the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ, whose son is he?" Ask the star that stood over His birthplace that the wise men might know where the infant Saviour lay. Ask the angels who announced His birth to the wondering shepherds in a burst of song. Ask the mother who knew the secret of His birth and hid in her heart the wise sayings of His childhood. Ask the waves of Galilee that tossed mountain high but at His word became as smooth as a sea of glass. Ask the lepers whom He cleansed, the blind to whom He gave sight, the deaf whom He enabled to hear. Ask the dead whom He raised, and the bereaved to whom He restored their dear ones. Ask the sun which at midday drew a thick veil over its face out of shame for the men who murdered their Redeemer. Ask the dead who burst the bonds of the grave when He died. Ask the countless multitudes in every land, who through nineteen hundred years have found in Him the satisfaction of all their

yearnings, whose burdens He has lightened, whose sorrows He has relieved, whose souls He has redeemed. Ask them, "Is He the Son of God?" and there breaks forth at once a unanimous "Aye, aye, He is the Son of God, He is the Son of God." The universe resounds with the acclamation. The flowers breathe it. The stars flash it forth. The angels rise from their thrones to announce it. In their everlasting song the redeemed on high celebrate it. Oh, men and women, let no "if" intrude into your hearts about it. Say frankly to yourself and your neighbour, "He is, He is the Son of God." May you feel it thoroughly; in every fibre of your body; with every faculty of your mind; with all the energy of your soul. Living may you rejoice in it. Dying may you pillow your head on its blessed consolations. Entering the other world may you be ready to join in the song that proclaims Jesus Christ King of kings and Lord of lords.

VI

CAN WE BELIEVE IN THE MIRACLES?

"Believe me for the very works' sake."—JOHN 14:11.

A HUNDRED years ago miracles held a very different place in Christian thought from what they hold to-day. At the end of the eighteenth century when William Paley won renown by his book on the *Evidences of Christianity,* the main argument was that Jesus Christ fulfilled prophecy and was able to perform miracles, and therefore He must be divine. Paley spoke of the "splendid apparatus of the miracles." But to-day men depreciate the miracles. Many are perplexed by them. Some are ashamed of them, and try to explain them away. Not a few repudiate them altogether, saying as a distinguished theological professor did in his classroom not long ago, "Miracles are unbelievable and unnecessary." Some who believe in them, yet are silent about them because they think that the truth makes a stronger appeal if the miraculous feature of Christ's work is kept out of sight.

But there the miracles are in the gospel narratives. They are given to us on the same testimony on which we accept the story of other parts of Christ's life. If we reject one part it seems to me we must reject other parts as well. The miraculous element is so woven into every part of the New Testament that you cannot successfully use your penknife on it. If you cut out the miracles and the arguments based on them you will have very little left.

There can be no doubt that the gospel writers felt

that the miracles that Jesus did made a profound impression in His favour on the people of His day. John tells us that so intelligent a man as Nicodemus was convinced of His divine mission by the miracles. He said to our Lord on his famous night-visit to Him, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." Just as positively Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared that the miracles were Christ's divine credentials. He spoke to the men of Israel of "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know." Evidently Jesus Himself felt His miracles ought to have been convincing arguments as to His divine authority. He undertook to prove His right to forgive sin by His power to cure disease. "That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith to the sick of the palsy, 'Rise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house.'" In denunciation of the cities of Galilee He said, "If the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." And on the last night of His life He evidently thought that His miraculous deeds should have been a bulwark to the apostles' faith strong enough to withstand even the shock of His ignominious death, for He said to them that if the truth He had spoken to them and the character He had exhibited to them were not sufficient to command their confidence they ought to believe Him "for the very works' sake." Now it seems to me we must take the New Testament as we find it. It would be more honest to reject it altogether than to take what we please, and quietly ignore the rest. Nobody in Christ's time

seems to have disputed the fact that Christ was a miracle worker. His friends rejoiced in it. His enemies admitted His power and put a vicious explanation on it, saying that He got it from the devil. The Jewish Talmud acknowledges His miraculous gifts. The first writer against Christianity, Celsus, who lived about 150 years after Christ's death, admitted His powers but attributed them to magic. Not until Hierocles wrote in the third century have we any serious denial that Jesus Christ exerted miraculous powers of a very remarkable kind.

A Fellow of Oxford University has told us that at the end of a series of lectures on miracles that were delivered there, the Professor said, "Well, gentlemen, if you believe in the miracles you will be nothing better, and if you do not believe in them you will be nothing worse." But one cannot thoughtfully assume such an attitude of indifference as that. They who declare that miracles are impossible put fetters on God in the midst of His own universe. But the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is as much at home in the universe as a man is in his own household, and is as able to stretch out His hand to help His children everywhere as an earthly father is to put his arms about his child to comfort it. To reject miracle is to reject Christianity, for no way has as yet been devised by which miracles can be taken out of the New Testament, and the veracity and authority of the New Testament still be maintained. Doubtless there are many good people who profess not to believe in miracles who yet accept the New Testament as one of the best of books, and sincerely love and serve Jesus Christ, but they have not thought this thing out to its end, and happily their living is better than their thinking.

It is not difficult to see why miracles have fallen into such disrepute. There have been so many counterfeits that they have compromised the reputation of the genuine article. Stories of the marvellous are wonderfully common. Sober historians like Herodotus and Livy and Tacitus have their tales of miraculous deeds. The Middle Ages teem with miracles of the most extravagant kind, absurd to the point of folly. Brewer's *Dictionary of Miracles* has six hundred pages of them, with many miracles recorded on each page. If you read them you will be astonished at men's credulity. But just as men do not say that all money is worthless because there are many counterfeits, so no one is warranted in saying that there is no such thing as a miracle because so many frauds have been perpetrated.

And a man has very little discernment if he does not at once detect the difference between these spurious miracles and those wrought by the hands of Jesus Christ. There are miracles and miracles. The miracles of Jesus Christ are seen to be different from other miracles. They have an air of reality about them. They have a simplicity and beauty that you do not find elsewhere. There was no jugglery involved in working them. Jesus muttered no incantation. He never shrouded Himself about with the mystery that is so dear to the professional necromancer. He never made a show of His great deeds. He did not advertise Himself. Often He bade one whom He helped not to tell of the miracle by which he had been helped. He never worked a miracle for Himself. He did not play the healer for pay as do the members of the singular cult of which we hear so much to-day. His wonderful deeds were always the outgo of compassion from His great heart. They always had some high moral end in view. And they were themselves of the

gracious character of the God whom He came into the world to make known.

Miracles are disliked to-day and the believer in miracles is held in pity or in contempt because this age of ours is in love with the orderly processes of nature, and a miracle is looked upon as an interruption of those processes. The scientific spirit looks upon such an interruption as impossible and the very suggestion is regarded as an impertinence. Dr. Augustus H. Strong cites Fichte's illustration of the inviolability of nature. Fichte tells us to imagine a pebble swept to a high place on the sea beach by the strongest wave of a stormy day, and then he speculates upon the changes in nature which would have been necessary to land the pebble one foot further up on the sand. The wave must have been of greater volume and the wind that drove it of greater force. The state of the atmosphere which caused the wind must have been different and the conditions which gave rise to the state of atmosphere must in their turn have been different from what they were. There is no possible stopping place either in space or time. To make a change in the movement of that pebble conditions would have had to be changed not only in Africa where the wind that caused the wave arose, but everywhere else around the globe, and you cannot stop until you have pushed the chain of causes back to the very beginning of time. So this German philosopher argues the impossibility of modifying in any degree the orderly processes of nature. Everything, everywhere, he says, is in the grip of law which never relaxes its hold and which knows neither variableness nor shadow of turning. But the English philosopher, Henry Mansel, suggests the way out of this difficulty. He says, "Let us imagine that after the wind and the waves have done their work

to the utmost I go down to the beach and lifting the pebble from its place I deposit it a foot further up on the sand." That answer is complete. Very few, indeed, would say that human thought and will are as much under the control of the forces of nature as that pebble is. Only a pronounced materialist could say that. Only a fatalist of the most hopeless kind could say that. Few of us doubt that we have in our bosoms a power superior to the blind forces of nature. With old Samuel Johnson we stamp our feet and say, "We know we're free and there's an end on it." Every day these wills of ours so use the laws of nature as to bring about very different results from what would have been had nature been left to herself. Every time we rise from the chair on which we have been sitting we direct the laws of nature so that they bring about a different result from what they would have done had we been quiet. Every time I stoop down and pick up a stone and hurl it up in the air so that it comes down a hundred feet away I do the same thing. Every time you carry some object from one place to another you make the laws of nature serve you. Gravitation would hold you on your chair; it would keep in the places where they are the things which you transport to some other place. But in what you do you are not interfering with the laws of nature. You are bowing to them, rather. But by the exertion of a superior power you are bringing about a different result from what unassisted nature would bring about. That shows the nature of a miracle. We do not assume that God violates the laws of nature to work His beneficent will for His children. The use of nature may be as great a wonder as any violation of nature could be. As Lyman Abbott once said, "Miracles are indeed supernatural, that is above nature,

but they are not contranatural, that is contrary to nature."

You can easily multiply for yourselves illustrations of how we change the course of nature. We do it every day. We do it every hour. Some of us live in the country and know the ways of a garden. Some of us live in the city and have a summer home and one of our delights is to tinker in a garden, to the amusement of our neighbours and our own instruction. For we get a great deal more out of those gardens than the vegetables we raise. Every year we use the wonderful forces of nature that are at work in those gardens. The ground is plowed and harrowed; the warm spring rains fall upon it; the sun shines on the soft ground; and all the seeds that have been blown upon it from a dozen different sources feel within them the stirrings of life. Something is doing in that ground, far more than we can see. But left to itself nature would not bring forth the things that would be useful to the family that will spend the summer there. So we interfere in some degree with the ordinary course of nature. We put pieces of potato and grains of corn, and peas and beans and what not into that ground. Left to itself for a million years the ground would not bring forth those useful products. A superior power, a man's will and a man's hands, must come in and direct nature's forces so that they work to beneficent ends. And I never look at the cultivated fields in making a journey but I think that in working His miracles, Jesus Christ no more interfered with the laws of nature than men do in producing their crops. And does any one mean to tell me that man can so manipulate the forces of nature as to bring about the ends he desires and the God of nature, who made all things there are, must sit with His hands tied, helpless

in the midst of the universe He made? There could not possibly be a more foolish suggestion than that.

Auberlen well says, "The question whether a miracle is possible amounts to the query whether there is a living God who created the world." And Thomas Huxley, that magnificent popularizer of knowledge, said, "The so-called a priori arguments against theism, and given a deity, against the possibility of creative acts, appear to me to be destitute of reasonable foundation." Even the free thinker Rousseau says in his *Lettres de la Montagne,* "Seriously to raise this question whether God can perform miracles would be impious if it were not absurd; and we should be doing the man who answers it in the negative too much honour by punishing him for it; it would be sufficient to keep him in custody." The Psalmist, you will remember, expresses astonishment and represents God as being angry because the people of Israel thought His power limited and asked incredulously, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" And we are guilty not only of folly but of impiety as well when we say that man can so use nature's laws as to make them his servants, but God must sit supine and helpless while His own laws work aimlessly on like a machine that runs but does no work for Him.

Do not let any one delude himself into believing that the New Testament and science are in conflict in this matter of miracles. There are doubtless individual scientists who will tell you that stories of miracles are nothing but fables, but that is not the voice of science. Science may once have been dogmatic but to-day it is modest. So many mistakes have been made in the name of science that thoughtful men are cautious about saying anything is impossible to-day. Once men thought that the earth was so separated from other bodies in

space that we could tell little about them. Comte, for example, said that we could not tell what any of the stars or planets were made of. But since his day we have discovered spectrum analysis, and we know of what substances the sun is composed and we can analyze the light of the stars and tell their chemical composition. Comte was mistaken, that is all. And there is Laplace. He was called the Isaac Newton of France, and Fourier said of him, "He would have completed the science of the skies had the science been capable of completion." And yet Laplace said that stones could not possibly fall out of the heavens upon the earth. But every child who has visited the Museum of Natural History knows that the great Laplace made a mistake when he said that. Men thought Professor Morse a crack-brained fool when he thought he could send a message fifty miles over a wire. They said it was impossible. It is commonplace now. We are talking hundreds of miles to-day without a wire. We sit in our homes in New York or Chicago or hundreds of miles from anywhere, far back in the wilderness, and listen by radio to a concert being given in London. When the discovery of the X-ray was first announced I spoke of it in my prayer-meeting one night, and told how it was possible to see the bones within our flesh; a very intelligent school-teacher who was in the audience said quietly to some of the young people that it was evident that some one had taken the pastor in. Now X-ray examination is one of the commonest of things. A young man who looked with the surgeon when an examination of his father's chest was made said, "Father, I have seen your heart beat."

Nobody will venture to say now what is possible or impossible. We are doing a score of things to-day that

fifty years ago would have been regarded as the vagaries of a crazy man. David Hume contended in his famous essay on Miracles that no amount of evidence could prove a miracle. But that was 150 years ago. Hume is out of date now. John Stuart Mill gave him his quietus. Mill said that all that Hume proved was that "No amount of evidence could prove a miracle to one who did not previously believe in the existence of a being or beings with supernatural power, or who believes himself to have full proof that the character of the being he recognizes is inconsistent with his having seen fit to interfere on the occasion in question." Of course we know that an atheist in the very nature of the case does not believe in the possibility of a miracle. Of course we know that the man who believes that God made the world and then let it go without His oversight or care, does not believe in a miracle. And that is all that Hume proved. Professor Huxley frankly said in a letter to Lord Morley that "he was in entire agreement with the orthodox arguments against Hume's a priori reasonings" against them. Flammarion well says, "Scientific sagacity consists in being very careful how we deny the possibility of anything." The thing to do in every case is to weigh the evidence. Men are under the same obligation to do this concerning the miracles of the New Testament as concerning other things. The men who reject the miracles of the New Testament are either those who have not weighed the evidence fairly or who have begun their study with the conviction that a miracle is impossible. The men in Christian pulpits to-day who deny miracles are men who put a low estimate on the character of Jesus Christ. These two things are indissolubly connected.

And that leads me to say that when we know what

sort of a person Jesus Christ was it is easy to believe He wrought miracles. He was so great Himself that great things were natural to Him. His deeds and His personality are in close relation, as of course they must be. A common man does common things. An extraordinary man does extraordinary things. The divine man does divine things. It could not be otherwise. He Himself is the greatest miracle of all. He is greater than anything He did. That He did mighty works does not rest on the mere testimony of men however unanswerable that testimony may be. His own character is the best proof that He did wonderful things. In Him was remarkable quality of life. In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Just as surely as effect follows cause then, must His way through the world be marked by exceptional deeds. They are the appropriate fruit of an exceptional life. His character was unparalleled and His deeds would naturally be unparalleled. The question is not whether He could work miracles but whether He could keep from working miracles.

You have heard of the wonderful boy, Zerah Colburn. He could multiply six figures by six figures. You and I painfully take one figure at a time and multiply a single figure by it. Zerah Colburn could multiply a whole row of figures by the whole of the other row and give you the answer faster than you could set it down. To you and me that is miraculous. To him it was natural because the calculating faculty was intensified in him. In the same fashion the musical faculty was greatly intensified in Blind Tom. If you played for him the most intricate piece of music Tom would repeat it for you on the piano though he never had heard it before. You and I might have to spend months in learning to play it as well. These are poor illustrations,

I know, but they at least serve to suggest that so divine powers were resident in Jesus Christ that what would be beyond our dreams even would be perfectly natural to Him. He did miraculous deeds because He had a miraculous character.

Of course the culmination of the wonderful things He did in the world was His own resurrection from the dead. He laid down His life voluntarily, and He took it again. It was an exertion of His own power. That is the supreme miracle of all. Admit that and it carries all the other miracles with it. That the apostles believed that He rose from the dead admits of no question. That Paul believed it no one can doubt. These men sealed their faith in that supreme miracle by laying down their lives. Men do not die for a lie. The evidence that they died for a great truth is unimpeachable if the laws of evidence mean anything.

There are things connected with our life in this world which cannot be explained except as we believe that God has interposed in the world's affairs. Nobody can explain, for example, how life came into the world. Men have tried to guess at it. But they have made very poor attempts. Science still says sternly that life comes only from life. The only explanation of the presence of life in this world is that the living God put it here. And that is a miracle.

Nobody can explain except by a miracle the conscience in a man's bosom. How did men come to feel themselves morally responsible? Nobody can guess his way out of a problem like that. I am not unfamiliar with the explanations given in university classrooms today, but really some day they will be regarded as puerile. There is no satisfactory answer to the problem except by believing that God put that sense of accountability

within a man and thus made him different from the beasts.

Who can explain that supreme change in a man's character that we call conversion except by saying that it is a miracle? The converted man rightly calls himself a miracle of grace. It is so great a change that the New Testament fitly calls it a new birth. Take the conversion of the river pirate, Jerry Macauley, or the jail bird, Michael Dunn, or the habitual drunkard, Samuel Hadley. Take the man whom Dr. Arthur T. Pierson used to tell us about who was called Rowdy Brown. He had killed men and somehow escaped the gallows. He was vicious in all his impulses. Once he saw a man seated in the forecastle of a Liverpool boat, and he kicked the man so violently in the mouth that he knocked some of his teeth out, simply because the man was reading the Bible. It was pure devilishness that moved him to do it. When he came to New York he heard of the conversion of one of his pals down in the Water Street Mission, and he swore that he would go down there and if that fellow got up to speak he would take him and by main force would pour a bottle of whiskey down his throat. He meant it. He went to the mission carrying the bottle of whiskey with him. But there was a power there on which he had not counted. As the meeting went on he was moved. He began to tremble. He felt as he never had felt before. When his pal arose to testify he was as still as death and as pale. When the invitation was given he not only went forward and fell on his knees but he cried out, "Pray for me!" He suffered paroxysms of distress. His soul was shaken by the Spirit's power. He groaned. He wept. He swayed to and fro in his emotion as he knelt there. He did not care who saw him. For two nights the tempest swept

through his soul, and then He who spoke peace to the waves of Galilee spoke to him, and there was a great calm in his soul. He was made over. He sat at the Saviour's feet clothed and in his right mind. He loved the things that one week before he had hated. He hated the things that a week before he loved. He praised Jesus Christ to everybody he met. He was so anxious to have his old associates saved that he used to take them up bodily and carry them into the meeting and set them down on the anxious seat, and then he would pray for them so earnestly that they were melted by the fervency of his pleadings. How do you explain a change like that? No philosophy can do it. That such changes are wrought cannot be denied. And the only rational explanation of them is that the Saviour whose power opened the eyes of the blind, and unstopped the ears of the deaf, and gave cleansing to the leper and brought back the dead to life nineteen hundred years ago is in the world still. His hand is still stretched out in miracle working. We know it. We have felt its touch ourselves, and have experienced within us its almighty power.

And what He has saved He will keep. Have no fear about it. His power is not shortened. His ear is not heavy. He can feed hungry souls still as He fed the five thousand. He can still our unquiet lives as He stilled Tiberias. He can make us pure as He made the leper's flesh come back to him as sweet and fresh as the flesh of a little child. He can hold us up as He rescued Peter sinking into the wave. He will not leave us nor forsake us. He will keep us to the end. He will comfort us in the dark valley so that we shall know that He has conquered death indeed, and He will raise us up again to sit with Him in heavenly places.

VII

CAN WE BELIEVE IN THE ATONEMENT?

"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but to us which are saved it is the power of God."—1 CORINTHIANS 1:18.

THAT verse was written nearly nineteen hundred years ago in a land nearly seven thousand miles away. It sounds as though it was written in America last week. Paul is undertaking here to say what the heart of the Gospel is and to tell how it was regarded by some who heard it in his day. What the heart of the Gospel was Paul had not the slightest doubt. It was the preaching of the cross. He was so sure he was right about it that he said that if any one, though he was an angel from heaven, should preach any other gospel, he should be accursed.

From the beginning to the end of his wide ministry Paul preached only one Gospel without any slightest deviation. Wherever he went, whether he spoke to king, or priests, to scholars or the populace, Paul not only preached Jesus Christ, but this particular aspect of Christ,—Christ crucified. It was always the same thing. "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Just as Paganini went all over Europe drawing his music from one string of a violin so Paul sought to charm men and to draw them to Jesus Christ by harping on this one theme, what Jesus Christ did for men when He died on the cross and what the cross of Jesus Christ should move us to do for Him. It is said of Alfred Cookman that he lived within a circle

no point of which was more than three feet from the cross of Christ. It is a blessed place of residence. Paul dwelt there.

See how uniform Paul's message is. Hear how he is always ringing the changes on the one theme. Some one sounds it out, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." That is Paul speaking. "Ye are bought with a price," it is Paul speaking again. "When we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly," that is Paul speaking. I do not need any one to suggest it to me. I know the accent of it. "God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us,"—it is Paul again without any doubt.

But so it is with the other apostles. There is only one Gospel preached in the whole New Testament. We talk a great deal about different aspects of Christ, especially as presented by the different writers of the New Testament. We talk learnedly about "The Christ of the Synoptics," "The Christ of St. John," "The Christ of the Apocalypse," "The Christ of the Creeds," "The Christ of Yesterday," "The Christ of To-day," and "The Christ that is to Be." They ought to be one and the same. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. So far as the apostles are concerned they are the same. I hear one say, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Who is it speaking? It sounds like Paul. No, it is Peter. Listen again, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanseth us from all sin." Is it Paul? It sounds like him. No. Is it Peter? It has his accent. No, it is John. It is all one thing no matter what apostle speaks. There is only one gospel in the New Testament.

But Paul speaks of some who rejected this gospel and undertook to preach another gospel. We are a little too apt to think that this spiritual malady of preaching some other gospel is peculiar to our time. Oh no! every age has had people to whom the cross of Christ was an offence. In his letter to the Galatians Paul speaks of the "offence of the cross," and in his letter to the Corinthians he says that the preaching of the cross was "foolishness" to some. And you know that when we read the Epistles to the Galatians and the Corinthians we are within twenty-five or thirty years only of the crucifixion of Christ. So early in Christian history were there those who had a distaste for the cross. It is true that Paul and the other apostles made the cross the centre of all their preaching, but even in that day there were those who were preaching something else. There were congregations that demanded something else. The preaching of the cross made the Jews angry: it made the Greeks scoff: it made the Romans smile. And there are always preachers who are ready to say just the word that is in demand. Paul was not of that sort. He delivered the message that God commanded him to deliver, and he spoke the word that he felt men needed whether men liked it or not. He said in a letter he wrote to one of the churches he founded, "Other men may preach what they please but we preach Christ crucified."

And Paul's example is a good one to follow. For really and truly there is nothing else in the world worth preaching. Some preach politics, but a sermon on politics never comforted the sorrowing or saved the lost. Some preach social economics, but the pulpit that is given to sociological discussions is not the one that brings to whiteness and purity the community that is black with

sin. Some preach on current events, and forget to point out that an event that occurred nineteen hundred years ago on a hill seven thousand miles from America's shores, is the event that gives significance to all the events of to-day and determines for every one of us the issues of eternity as well.

There was another falling away from the preaching of the cross in the days of what was called "Moderatism" in Scotland. After ten years of conflict the Church of Scotland was disrupted in 1843. Of her twelve hundred ministers nearly five hundred left her; all her missionaries left her but one; a full third of her members deserted her; so many were true to their faith as against the Establishment that many churches stood empty in Edinburgh. It was a time of heart-rending sorrow to those who were thus exiled from the church of their fathers. The old Covenanter who "cam oot" in '43 is described as sitting in his later days with his golden-haired granddaughter by his side and saying to her:

"There's nae gospel noo, lassie,
There's nae covenant blood,
There's nae altar noo, lassie,
There's nae Lamb o' God."

Then he strokes the curls of the child and his quavering voice goes on:

"There's nae Chalmers noo, lassie,
There's nae guid McCheyne,
And the dear, dear Cross they preached, lassie,
The dear, dear Cross is gane."

And the snowy white head bows lower and lower, and the eyes fill with tears, as the old man says:

"Folk dinna want the cross, lassie,
They've cutten doon the tree,
And naebody believes in it,
But fools like you and me."

Yes, there was a falling away from the preaching of the cross in the days of what was called Moderatism in Scotland.

We had another "falling away" in the defection that took place in the Congregational churches of New England nearly a hundred years ago, when a large body of the people went over to Unitarianism. And they were not willing to go out, cherishing their faith, and giving and suffering for it as the Covenanters did, but they seized and held the meeting-houses, and other property of the churches, that were given by those who believed in the cross, and given for upholding the preaching of the cross. More than eighty churches were rent asunder; three thousand nine hundred members finding their Saviour wounded in the house of His friends withdrew, and the more than twelve hundred Unitarians who remained, took possession of the property of the churches to the value of six hundred thousand dollars, a sum vastly greater then than that would be now.

And it need not surprise us that we are passing through such a period of trial again. It is no new thing. It has come upon the church many times before. It certainly is upon us now. Look at our recent hymnals and you will find evidence of this. Hymns about the atonement are few indeed. "There is a fountain filled with blood," "Alas, and did my Saviour bleed!" and all hymns like them are eliminated. We are told that those figures are too gross for the taste of the present day. That is one reason why when we erected our splendid new meeting-house we selected no new hymnal for it, but we got a new supply of a hymnal thirty years old, because it sets forth the evangelical faith in unmistakable terms. It glorifies the cross as Paul did.

In Paul's day when men revolted against the preach-

ing of the cross they suggested other ways of salvation. They are doing it to-day. It is being done in pulpits that are called Christian. Men are being trained to preach these false gospels in seminaries that were founded to defend the Christian faith, by teachers who pledged themselves to instruct young men in Scriptural truth. In a thousand subtle and plausible ways the Gospel that Paul preached is being denied, and even derided as fit only for African savages, and the authority of Paul to preach his Gospel at all is being impugned. I sometimes wonder what the chief of the apostles would say if he could sit in some of our churches and hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ perverted, or could listen to men in our theological seminaries pooh-poohing what he declared was the only thing worth calling a Gospel.

Now let us examine the substitutes for Paul's Gospel which men propose. Some time ago walking on North Broad Street in Philadelphia I saw a tablet set up in front of a church, that professed to give the creed of the people who worship there. There were two things stated clearly in that creed. Jesus was a teacher, that was set forth there. Jesus was our example, that was there. That was all. There was not a single word about Jesus Christ beyond that. How much of a gospel is that? Is that all the gospel you need? Let us look at it.

This is the first proposition: Jesus Christ saves us by teaching us the truth. He knew more about God than anybody else; and He has revealed God to us as one who loves us; and if we live according to His teaching we shall come to the end of life in safety. It must be said that there is an air of reasonableness about that. One who does all that for us may in some sense be called a Saviour to us.

Sitting on the piazza of our simple summer home on

the Rhode Island shore, looking out over the sea at night as we look to the east we can see Point Judith light, "Pint Judy" as the old Rhode Islander calls it. To the southeast we can see the Block Island light and the gas buoy off Block Island. Directly south we can see Montauk Point flashing its intermittent light over twenty miles of water. To the west you can get now and then a glimpse of the light at Watch Hill. Now the men who reared those lighthouses showing the man at the ship's wheel where the places of danger are along the coast, and pointing out the channels in which it is safe to steer, may fairly be regarded as having done the work of a saviour. But for them many a ship would have been wrecked and many a poor mariner would have found a watery grave. In some such sense as that, we are told Christ saves us. He has revealed to us the truth by which we should live; He has pointed out the way in which we should go; and if we live in obedience to Him, we should reach heaven in safety.

But it does not take a second thought to see that if that is all that Christ has done for us He is not the only Saviour, as the Scriptures declare Him to be. Men were not dying for the lack of teachers when Jesus Christ came into the world. Almost all that Christ said had been said before. His mind was saturated with the teaching of the old Jewish prophets. Even Christ's specialty that God is love, men had in crystalline clearness before. They did not need any new messenger to teach them that God is love. The Old Testament is full of that. What does this mean, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy"? That is in the Old Testament. Hear this, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." That, too, is in the Old Testament. Again,

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." That is in the Old Testament. Can anything outgo this, "Can a mother forget her nursing child? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee"? But that is a declaration of the Old Testament. Anybody who will read the Old Testament will see that it is full of messages that tell men of God's love. I very much wish that men who form theories about the Bible would now and then read the Bible at least for a few minutes to find out what is really there.

Many other men pointed out the way of life. Moses did. Nothing that Christ ever said went beyond this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind and heart and soul and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." Even Christ said that any one who did that should live. But Moses spoke those words fifteen hundred years before Christ came among men. Moses declared the truth. The prophets did. The apostles did, and all the line of holy men through whom God declared His will to men. Some of them did more of this work than Christ Himself did. Christ wrote no book. He sent no epistle about among the churches to be read for their instruction. The words that actually fell from His lips that have come down to us make up only twenty or thirty pages of the New Testament. If salvation is wrought for us by giving us the truth why are not these men who did so much of it set forth as the saviours of men and the redeemers of sinners? But where is there any slightest hint that Moses stands in any such relation? I have read numerous books that bear such titles as these,—"The Gospel in the Psalms," "The Gospel in Ezekiel," "The Gospel in Isaiah," and the like. And the Gospel is there. Those men taught gospel truth, and pointed out the way of salvation. But where

are David and Isaiah and Ezekiel set forth as the saviours of men, because they were faithful teachers of God's truth? Peter so taught the truth one day that three thousand people were converted under the one sermon, but nobody that day or at any time since has said we must believe on Peter to have everlasting life. Indeed Peter insisted as stoutly as Paul ever did that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" except the name of Jesus Christ.

No man ever worked to save men as Paul did. In teaching and preaching he was absolutely without a peer. But though his teachings have shaped the thinking of the Church for nineteen hundred years yet in all that time no one has intimated that by believing on Paul you could be saved. But look for yourselves and see how much Paul did in teaching God's truth compared with what Jesus Christ did as a teacher. Jesus Christ taught three years; Paul taught thirty years. Christ never went outside of His own little country except once, and then He went just over the border; Paul went to the ends of the earth in his missionary zeal. Jesus Christ restricted His ministry to the Jews; Paul preached to everybody, Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, Roman, Scythian, bond and free. Christ gathered only a handful of converts; Paul had a multitude, and he planted churches throughout Asia Minor and through the countries of southern Europe.

But for all this you never find Paul instituting any comparison between the work that Christ did and the work that he did. He recognized that they were in different classes. Paul taught men. Christ was more than a teacher. In the presence of other men Paul stood erect. He declared that he was no whit behind the

chief of the apostles. But in the presence of Christ he esteemed himself as nothing. He bowed low at His feet and adored Him just as the sinful woman did who washed those feet with her penitential tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Paul always said that he was Christ's slave. He would do anything for Christ. He went to jail for Him. He wore chains for Him. He was proud to do it. No woman ever was half so proud of her jewels as Paul was of the fetters he wore for Christ's sake as he stood before kings. He went over in his mind the sufferings he endured for the Saviour much as a lover might recount the gifts he had made to his sweetheart. He was beaten, he was scourged, and stoned, and shipwrecked, thrown to the lions, and put to the sword and suffered the loss of all things for Christ's sake. And he could easily bear it all. But there was one thing that you and I do not think so much about that Paul could not bear. He trembled with excitement, he was grieved and horror-struck when any one dared to put Paul on a level with Paul's Master. When the Corinthian church was split into factions, one group saying, "I am of Paul," another, "I am of Apollos," a third, "I am of Cephas," and a fourth, "I am of Christ," as though they were all teachers and nothing else, Paul turned upon them and said, "Was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" Others may talk as they please about a mere revelation of truth saving us, but evidently Paul looked to something else. And Paul knew.

One other thing is stated on that tablet on which the church of which I have spoken had inscribed its creed. It said that Christ is our example. Christ saves us not simply by teaching us the truth but by showing us how to live the truth. Without doubt He is our example. He

said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." And it is not easy to furnish others an example of right conduct. Shakespeare says significantly, "I could easier teach twenty what were good to be done than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching." It must be admitted that one who sets us a perfect example of right living, one who goes before us in life's journey and shows us the way in which we ought to walk, is in a sense a saviour.

Some years ago we were spending the summer in the White Mountains. Some of us were eager to climb Mount Lafayette. The keeper of the hotel where we were staying besought us to take a good guide. He said that only the year before a man started out from his hotel to make that climb. He went alone and he never came back. His dear ones were almost crazed with grief, and the whole community was shocked. They could only conjecture what had happened to him. He may have fallen into some ravine and perished. He may have been attacked by some wild creature. He may have become bewildered in the woods and died of exhaustion. Now in such a case as that, the guide who leads you in the right way is in a sense your saviour from suffering and perhaps death. But for him you might have dropped into some pitfall and your unburied body have been left to rot and your bones to bleach in the forest wilderness. In some such way as that, men say, Jesus Christ saves us. He sets us such a fine example of right living, and patient suffering, and holy dying, that by closely following Him we reach heaven at last.

What do you think of that? Is that the sort of gospel you need? Alas for me, if that is all the good news that Jesus Christ has to give me. For I am not simply in danger of falling. I am already fallen. I am not

simply in danger of being lost. I am already lost, lost and undone by sin. What I need is some arm long enough and strong enough to reach down to where I am, and by main force to lift me out of the horrible pit and the miry clay into which I have fallen and set my feet upon a rock. What I need is some one who, like the shepherd of whom the Saviour Himself told us, will go out into the wilderness where I am lost, and seek and seek and seek until he finds me and brings me with rejoicing to the safety and comfort of the fold. Follow His example? Tread in His footsteps? Walk as He, the only begotten Son of God walked? Why, there never was another like Him. He lived for thirty years in the midst of corruption, absolutely uncorrupted. He was the dear friend of sinners, and publicans and harlots, and yet He took none of their stains on His character, and He left the world holy, harmless and undefiled. Who else can do that? Who of us lives twenty-four hours without sin? Who of us after his best day does not need to get down on his knees and cry out, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." Follow His example to be sure; walk as He walked; copy to the full the example He set us, but when we have done our best we shall see only the more clearly that our only hope is in the mercy of God the Father and the blood of Christ the Son.

Anybody who will read the New Testament can easily see that the one and only salvation that it proclaims is neither of these ways that men propose. It is a salvation by atoning blood. Blood paid our debt. Blood sealed our pardon. Blood washed away our pollution. We were redeemed not with corruptible things as silver and gold but with the precious blood of God's Son. We were to die, justly condemned for our sins, and He

who was sinless took our place and died in our stead, and by His death we live. That is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is the whole of it, and they who mislead poor human creatures by preaching some other gospel deserve to be execrated. Really this modern so-called gospel is nothing but old-time infidelity. David Friedrich Strauss who by his *Leben Jesu* has been leading men astray for a hundred years, said just as the preachers of this modernist gospel of to-day do, "Jesus is not a Saviour by His atoning death but by His teaching and example which exercise an elevating and therefore a redeeming influence upon us all; men are justified not through faith in another's righteousness but by faithfulness to their own conviction, that is, by the earnest endeavour always to shape action by a recognized standard of duty." If that is all the gospel Jesus Christ brought to us, He brought no gospel at all. The final and complete proof that the gospel of the New Testament is divine is that it exactly suits the needs of all God's creatures. If we substitute for the gospel of a crucified Christ this "other" gospel of "turn over a new leaf and save yourself," we have no message at all for a great multitude who sorely need a Saviour's compassion.

Dr. Charles Berry, the famous preacher of Wolverhampton, England, who was invited to be the successor of Henry Ward Beecher in Plymouth Pulpit, Brooklyn, once told his friend, Dr. J. H. Jowett, how he learned the sort of salvation that men needed. He said that one night there came to his door in Wolverhampton, a Lancashire girl with a shawl about her head and clogs on her feet. Dr. Berry went to the door himself. The girl said, "Be you the meenister?" Dr. Berry said that he was. She said, "I want ye to come and get my mother

in." Dr. Berry thought it was a case of drunkenness and that the girl wanted her mother taken care of, so he said to her that she had better go to the police station. From the horrified look on the girl's face he saw that he had made a mistake. She said, "No, my mother is dying and I want ye to come and get her into salvation." And by the way, that is a fine phrase that poor girl coined in her distress, "get her into salvation." It will bear study. Dr. Berry said, "How far away do you live?" The girl said, "A mile and a half from here." "Is there no minister nearer?" he asked. She said, "Yes, but I wanted you, and won't ye come?" Dr. Berry could not resist that appeal and he went with her. He found that the house to which the girl took him was a house of ill fame. In the lower stories men and women were drinking and roystering. They went to the top floor and there just as the girl had said, a woman lay dying. Dr. Berry sat down by her side and told her how God's Son came from heaven and taught us how to live and set us a beautiful example to help us. The woman listened for a while and then bewildered she looked at him out of her eyes of death and said, "But, Mister, that's no good for the likes o' me. I'm a dying sinner, don't ye see?" There he sat by the side of a dying sinner, and he a minister of the Gospel, had nothing to tell her. Then he thought of the simple story that his mother told him in his childhood, of how God's only Son came from heaven, and took our place as sinners and died for us, and saved us. It was a much more primitive gospel than he had been preaching from his pulpit. But he told it to this poor woman just as his mother told it to him. And as he told it she fastened her eyes on him and reached her hand toward him and said eagerly, "Now you're getting at it, that's what I

need." And when Dr. Berry told the story to his friend, Dr. Jowett, he said, "I got her in that night, and what's more, I got in myself, and ever since that night I have had a full gospel for lost sinners." There is nothing else in all the world in the least like it. It is like the music of heaven itself. Have the other gospels that men offer anything to compare with it? Well, then, we would say with Paul, "Let others preach what they please, we preach Christ crucified," and we rejoice in that saying on which Paul rested his heart that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

VIII

CAN WE BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST?

"He showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs."—Acts 1 : 3.

I AM willing to rest all my Christian faith on the single fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That Christ rose from the dead is fundamental to all that Christian people believe. If that is not true nothing that I preach is true. If Christ did not rise from the dead the whole structure of our faith falls just as surely as a building will topple if you recklessly dig the foundation from under it. Professor Huxley said that it is very foolish for Christian people to stake their religion on one fact and that a fact that it is so difficult to accept. But I will do precisely that, and I have no hesitation in declaring that that is precisely what the New Testament does. It rests everything on the one fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In every age there have been some men who have been skeptical about the possibility of a resurrection. King Agrippa, sitting before the Apostle Paul, professed to believe in a resurrection, and yet when he was confronted with the concrete fact of a resurrection he was so doubtful that Paul made special appeal to him and asked why a resurrection should seem a thing incredible to him. The question that Paul put to Agrippa I wish to put to each one of you. Why should you think a resurrection from the dead incredible?

When I say that Christ rose from the dead I mean just that. Many Christian preachers are saying to-day

that the resurrection means simply that life continues after death. It means nothing of the sort. The writers of the four Gospels when they described the resurrection of Christ meant just what we mean by a resurrection. Paul, when he said that Christ arose, meant that the very body that was put into the grave came out of the grave, still bearing the marks by which you could tell that it had hung on the cross. The New Testament writers never juggled with the words they used. There is not a place in the New Testament where the resurrection is spoken of where it does not mean that the dead body became alive again. Nobody took it to mean simply that the soul lived on. They did not understand a resurrection to mean the deliverance of the soul at the dissolution of the body. We do not mean that now by a resurrection. They did not then. Indeed that is what we mean by death, and not resurrection. When some of the Roman soldiers who watched the tomb ran and told the priests what had happened they were not talking about the disembodied soul of Christ, they were talking about His body. Any one who tries to make Christ's resurrection mean anything else than a restoration to life of the body that was dead is not honest, or else he has not the sense to understand plain language.

Certainly a Christ who died and was buried and never came out of the grave is not the Christ that the New Testament tells us about. He is not the Christ whom men have believed in for nineteen hundred years. The marvel to me is that the man who does not believe the plain statement of Scripture that Christ rose from the dead can continue to preach. I would rather my arm should hang palsied by my side, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth and I be forever helpless and speechless than to stand in a pulpit dedicated to preach-

ing the Gospel and declare there that the Word of God is a lie; that the apostles may have believed that Christ arose, but they were mistaken; that Christ may have thought that He would rise, but He never did. When I must twist and turn the New Testament doctrines before I can accept them, I will do as any honest man ought to do. I will get out of the pulpit and I will not enter it again until I can be loyal to the truth which Jesus Christ commissions me to preach.

Men are declaring in extenuation of their unbelief that no amount of evidence is sufficient to prove the resurrection of Christ. But the question of evidence is not a complex one, but a very simple one. And there are no two questions on which testimony is more conclusive than these two,—as to whether a man is dead, and whether a man is alive. Those are the two questions we have to deal with here. First, did Jesus Christ die? Second, was Jesus Christ afterwards alive again?

1. First, then, did Jesus Christ really die?

We often have to prove death. Every time payment is claimed on an insurance policy we have to prove death, and it is usually a very simple matter. And proof of the death of Jesus Christ could not be more complete than it is. No one who pretends to be sane could think of denying that Jesus Christ died. Men once tried to say that Jesus did not die but swooned away from exhaustion while on the cross and in that condition was put into the tomb and afterwards revived and appeared to His disciples. But nobody believes such nonsense now, and it is doubtful whether any one ever really believed it. Christ died in public not in private. There could be no simulation of death as He hung up there in sight of all. He died by violence too, and men who set out to kill accomplish their purpose if they are not interfered

with. His friends admitted His death; they had hoped against hope that He would not die, but they had to admit His death, and they were overwhelmed by it. They saw the look of death on His face; they heard His last words; they knew that He was dead. His enemies made sure that He was dead. They stood taunting Him as long as He lived, and when His ears could no longer hear the taunts, they went away triumphant in the thought that they had shown Him to be an impostor.

And then the soldiers were professional executioners. They were used to seeing men die. They knew the signs of death. They were as familiar with the signs of dissolution as any physician in the world, and they pronounced Him dead. One of them to make sure of it plunged a spear into His side. That is Christ's death certificate to all ages. That alone disposes of the swoon theory. And that act has enabled the modern scientific physician to state exactly the cause of His death. The blood and water that came out after the stab of the spear are a sign that Christ died of a ruptured heart. His great heart broke under the weight of the world's sin. Death was not due to the nails, though they were driven through His hands and His feet. It was not the spear that killed Him. He was already dead when the soldier thrust the spear into His side. He died of a broken heart. He was certainly dead. If ever anything was proved, that has been. The Lord of life was dead. Death had won its greatest victory. But it was only an apparent victory. Bunker Hill seemed to be a victory for the British. But it was the dearest victory they ever won. On the surface it was victory, at the heart of it was defeat. So it was on Calvary. Christ was dead, but by submitting to death He conquered death and came back to life.

That is the second thing we have to prove, that Jesus Christ came back to life. And the proof that He was dead is no more conclusive than the proof that He was alive again. Nobody expected to see Him arise. They thought it was all over with Him. His enemies exulted. His friends were in despair. Some who loved Him went to embalm the body, when to their astonishment they saw Him alive. They could not understand it. But there He stood before them. Some refused to believe on the testimony of those who had seen Him. But He came to them and submitted to their scrutiny, and like Thomas they fell on their knees before Him crying, "My Lord, and my God." What was it that changed the convictions of those men who could not and would not believe? They were not likely to be deceived. They saw Him alive, no doubt of that. They saw Him not only in a passing glimpse, but again and again through forty days of time. They talked with Him; they walked with Him; they ate with Him. Five hundred saw Him at once. For forty days, to many witnesses, He showed Himself alive by many unimpeachable proofs.

Certainly something remarkable happened to these men after their Master was crucified. From abject despair they were lifted into exultation; from weakness unspeakable they were lifted into strength. They were hiding in corners, in out-of-the-way places, for fear of their enemies, when suddenly they became as bold as lions. They dared to set themselves up in opposition to Rome even. It was like setting up an eggshell to resist an attack of one of our great modern guns, to expect these discouraged, untutored men to withstand the power of imperial Rome, the proud mistress of the world. But somehow they got courage for that. They

predicted Rome's downfall. They said that the simple story they had to tell would conquer the world. Something brought about the marvellous change that took place in these men. Something brought together the men who scattered after the crucifixion, and held them together. Something turned timidity into such courage as the world never saw. They went everywhere telling their story, and they stood ready to seal their testimony with their life blood, as indeed most of them did. There is no explanation of this except that the apostles told the truth. Christianity never could have come out of the grave in which Jesus Christ continued to lie dead. Matthew Arnold, the unbelieving poet, sang:

> "Far hence He lies, in some lone Syrian town
> And on His grave with shining eyes
> The Syrian stars look down."

But it is foolish to sing so. If Christ's body were still in the grave His cause would be there too. Judas thought His cause was dead. The Jews thought His cause was dead. And it was, unless He arose from the dead. You can explain the world's history only by believing that Christ who was dead came out of the grave alive. It is positively incredible that a civilization like ours should advance steadily for nineteen hundred years and be founded on a lie. You could no more support Christian civilization without a basis of reality than you could support the sky-scrapers of New York City towering fifty and sixty stories in height without a foundation under them. It is no more certain that Julius Cæsar lived than that Jesus Christ came out of the grave alive after He had been dead three days. It is no more certain that Oliver Cromwell lived and fought for England's liberty; or that Napoleon Bonaparte lived and fought against the liberty of the world; it is no more certain

that Abraham Lincoln lived and wrought for the liberty of the black slaves, than that Jesus Christ lived among men nineteen hundred years ago, that He died on a cross, that His dead body was put in the grave, that Roman soldiers were set to watch it, and that on the third day He came out of the grave and showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs. No fact in history is better established than that. You can get rid of it only by throwing the laws of evidence to the winds. Men are able to disbelieve the resurrection of Christ only by saying that no amount of evidence could prove it. Such a man it is useless to argue with. He has given up thinking, and on that subject he is not sane.

There is only one more question that could possibly arise, and that is as to whether the man who is alive is the same man who died on the cross. Could there possibly be some mistake as to that? But that is simply a matter of proving one's personal identity. And that is not an intricate or difficult matter. We might doubt whether a man is the one he claims to be if he had been out of sight for years. But there hardly could be any mistake when he was away for three days only and then comes back, and the proof is complete when he is recognized not by one person only but by a dozen, a score, and even several hundred. It surely was a simple matter for the apostles who had lived with Jesus for three years to recognize Him after an absence of three days only, and that when He had on Him marks that proved His identity with the one who had hung on the cross. And yet there are men who call themselves Christians, and some of whom stand in Christian pulpits, who would have us believe that identification is so difficult a matter that no amount of testimony from any number of sensible men is sufficient to prove the identity of the

Christ who was risen with the Christ who was crucified. Men who argue in that fashion have lost their reason.

Pardon me some personal reminiscences. It is a common thing for me to meet people whom I have not seen for years. They come to church to hear me preach. I meet them in places all over the country where I have appointments to speak. It has been exceedingly interesting to me to see how they identify me. I was speaking in Williamsport, Penna., some time ago. After the services were over an elderly lady came up to speak to me. She had been the soprano in the choir in the church in Philadelphia which I had attended as a boy. She had not seen me since I was ten years old, but she said she recognized me as soon as I came on the platform that night, and I was in no doubt at all as to her identity. Some time ago a woman came into my own prayer-meeting in New York. She had heard me relate my Christian experience in Beth Eden Church in Philadelphia when I was a boy fourteen years old. She had not seen me since that night. She came to the church not certain that I was the same person. But she says that she recognized me on sight, and she told me some of the things I said that night when as a boy I asked to be received into the church, and I can testify that her memory was accurate. In another instance a woman came to my church whom I baptized in Philadelphia thirty years ago. She had not seen me for twenty-seven years. She said that at first sight she was doubtful, but as soon as I began to speak her doubts vanished. She said that the voice was unmistakable.

But in all these cases, you will say, the people were expecting to see me. That is true. And that might affect one's judgment about the certainty of their identification. But two other cases stand out in my experi-

ence where there was no such expectation and yet the identification was complete.

Some time ago I had occasion to go to an apartment house office on upper Broadway, New York City. I found a young man in the office and talked with him. I did not suppose I ever had met him before. I had no reason to give him my name in the inquiries I was making. At the conclusion of the conversation he said to me, "Isn't your name Goodchild?" "Yes," I replied. "Frank Goodchild?" he then asked. I said, "Yes." He said, "I heard you preach in Philadelphia." I said, "I left Philadelphia more than twenty-five years ago." He said, "You buried my grandmother and my cousin, and I heard you preach twice in your own church." He saw me four times when he was nothing but a boy, and after a lapse of twenty-five years he recognized me on sight. It is the simplest matter in the world, this matter of identifying people. If testimony as to one's identity were of no value or even of doubtful value, we could have no courts of justice. For the first thing required of a witness is that he shall look on the prisoner and identify him.

If we are not able to testify with accuracy as to one's identity it would be an exceedingly difficult thing to transact business. Some time ago I preached one Sunday in a church in Los Angeles, California. At the close of the day's services, the treasurer handed me a check. The next morning I went to the bank on which the check was drawn to have it cashed. But when I presented it at the paying teller's window he said, "Do you know any one in Los Angeles whom you could bring here to identify you?" "Yes," I said, "I know a number of business men in Los Angeles, but I would not wish to disturb any one of them to bring him here to

procure the payment of this check. But I have ample means of identification with me. I have two thousand dollars' worth of traveller's checks drawn to my order; I have a presentation watch with my full name engraved on it; I have mail which I received this morning in the hotel on whose property your bank is located." When he still looked doubtful I said, "With such means of identification as this I could get money from a bank in Hong Kong, or in almost any city in the world." But he shook his head and said, "Those things don't go here." You know Los Angeles boasts of being ninety-nine per cent. pure, and I have noticed that when people make such a loud boast of their own integrity they are usually very suspicious of other people. I paused a moment to think what to do next, and just then a man came up and put his face close to the teller's window and said, "This man is Frank M. Goodchild." I said, "That is correct, but who are you?" He said, "I heard you speak in Albany, N. Y." I said, "I have not spoken in Albany for ten years." He said, "Yes, it was about ten years ago. I was then pastor of a Baptist church in Albany. I am now private secretary to the president of this bank." That man had not seen me for ten years. He saw me then only as I stood on a platform speaking. That was the only time he ever saw me. And yet his identification of me was so complete and satisfactory that that suspicious bank teller immediately handed me out the hundred dollars my check called for. Why then should any one challenge the identification of the Master by men from whom He had been separated only three days? Identification is not so intricate and difficult a matter as some men would have us believe.

But, you say, you are accepting the testimony of the writers of the New Testament. Certainly. Why not?

With the exception of a single line in Tacitus the New Testament is the only written proof of the first century that Jesus Christ ever lived. But the New Testament is pretty good proof, let me tell you. The First Epistle to the Thessalonians was written in the year A. D. 53. The scholarship of the world is agreed on this. But that is only a little more than twenty years after the death of Christ. And in no book of the New Testament is the resurrection more clearly and positively announced than in this little epistle. Twenty years after the resurrection this little book speaks of the resurrection not as though it was a new announcement, but as a fact accepted by all the churches and that underlay their faith. That brings us pretty close to the resurrection. It is a little over sixty years since Abraham Lincoln was shot. There are many people in every congregation of Christian people who remember that fateful event. But this epistle that tells so clearly about the resurrection of Christ was in existence in one-third of that number of years after the resurrection took place.

Nobody doubts that Socrates lived. But the oldest manuscripts that speak of Socrates, the writings of Plato, are not earlier than the sixth century of our era, and that is a thousand years after Plato's death. And yet on the testimony of so recent a manuscript as that it is no strain on our faith to believe that Socrates lived. The oldest manuscript of Cæsar's commentaries that we have dates about seven hundred years after Cæsar's death. But we have manuscripts of the New Testament dating from the early part of the fourth century, that is within three hundred years after the death of Christ. So that we may confidently say that the resurrection of Christ is better attested than the poisoning of Socrates or the assassination of Julius Cæsar, and so far as I

know nobody doubts those events. There is absolutely no reason why any one should doubt the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is as well attested as any fact in human history. And the refusal of some to acknowledge it, does not in the least change the well assured fact.

This ought to make us very happy. We may confidently say that Christ is risen. If He is risen, all His claims are verified. If He is risen we shall be so exultant over it that we shall be eager to tell the good news to all the world. If He arose, we shall rise. If He arose, our dear ones who have gone from us are not dead but gone before and they are living in happiness with the Saviour. If He is risen He will take care of us to the end as He promised. If He is risen His cause cannot fail in the world, and ultimate and complete victory is certain. If He is risen He will come back again as He said He would, and every eye shall see Him, and His people will be with Him in His triumph and glory. Thank God He is risen!

IX

CAN WE BELIEVE IN A FUTURE LIFE?

"Because I live, ye shall live also."—JOHN 14:19.

WHEN Lazarus was raised from the dead the chief thought of his sisters, perhaps their only thought, was one of joy that they had him back again. There is no slightest hint in the story as it is told us in the New Testament that either Mary or Martha or the apostles ever argued from Lazarus's resurrection from the dead that we too should rise. I suppose one could make such an argument from the resurrection of anybody from the dead. If I had a friend who died; and I saw him die, so that I was sure of it; and I saw him buried so that I was sure of that; and he came back to me and took me by the hand, so that I was sure he was alive again; and I heard his voice just as it was before he died, that would mean tremendous things to me. My joy at having him back would be the least part of my emotions. My mind would at once set itself to work on the great fact that I had seen with my own eyes a man who was dead but was not dead now but as much alive as ever, and I would build on that one fact a whole philosophy of life; I would argue that death does not amount to anything; I should have no fear of death any more; I should know that all that I had imagined about the horrors of death and the fear I had had of being blotted out that makes us shrink from the end of existence here, were nothing but foolish fancies like the stories of bogies that nurses invent to frighten children with.

A man whose early life was spent in California told me of a child who lived in the southwestern part of our country where there are many great gulches like the Canyon of the Colorado. This child had a nurse who was very fearful lest some time when her eyes were off her, the child would wander away, and going too near the edge of the canyon, would fall over and be lost. So she told the child that she must keep away from the canyon; that the canyon was full of hobgoblins, and if she went near the edge of it they would catch her and eat her up. The child often looked at the canyon, but always with feelings of terror. At last an older brother who had been away at college came home. He had his little sister out walking with him one day. As they came near the edge of the great ravine he suggested that they go down the path into it. The child drew back in terror. She warned her brother of the danger of it. She told him about the hobgoblins, and the cruelties they would inflict on any one who came into their power, and she begged him not to go. Her brother laughed at her fears, but she was obdurate. Then pointing into the ravine he said to her, "Do you see that little hill on the other side of the gulley?" She said she did. Then he said, "If I go down there and stand on that hill, and come back safe and sound, will you go down with me?" That was a fair test and the child said "Yes." Down into the ravine the brother went. He was out of sight for a moment, and the little girl's heart was in her mouth. Then as she watched, he appeared again, and mounted the hill, and as he stood there he gaily waved his handkerchief, and she waved her hand in return. Then he started back; was out of sight again for a brief while, and then he reappeared at the top of the path down which he had gone. When she found there was no

sign of harm on him she put her hand in his and went down without fear. So precisely, if I should see some one who was dead, come back, safe and sound, and as much alive as ever, I should feel that my fear of death had no more foundation than that child's fear of hobgoblins.

That is the way our Lord's disciples felt about His resurrection from the dead. He told them that if they put their trust in Him, they would have nothing to fear. Death could not hold them. Death could not touch them. It could no more hurt them than it could hurt Him. Because He lived, they would live too. Life is as real on the other side of the gulley that lies between us and the other world as it is here, and it is a great deal fuller, and richer, and in every way better than it is here.

I am told that most people to-day feel no interest in a future life, and it is evident that many Christian people are losing their hold on it. Preachers have no vivid sense of the future, and they are even advising their people to adopt Henry D. Thoreau's maxim and live for one world at a time, though the New Testament Christians lived under the influence of the powers of the world to come and the apostles boasted that their citizenship was not of this world but was in heaven.

I can understand how those who have never lost a relative or friend might have little interest in another life. All their interests are here, and their thought and affections are here. But those who have had dear ones taken away by death, what sort of hearts and minds must they have if they do not try to see beyond the horizon of the short life we have here? What kind of appreciation of his dear ones can a man have who believes that they die like the beasts that perish? I can understand

how some plain woman in New York or Boston, doing her humdrum tasks day by day, should feel no interest in China. She has no ties to bind her to that country. Nothing has happened to awaken her interest in it. She hardly knows its location on the map. She never has undertaken to pronounce its names. But by and by her son goes to China, and that very evening she borrows an atlas from her next door neighbour, and she looks over that land from end to end; she learns to say the names of its towns and provinces so that she speaks them as easily as she does the names of the streets near her own home, and in less than a week's time the whole land of China is familiar and interesting to her. Even the Chinamen she passes on the street are full of interest to her now and she wishes she might stop them as they pass by and talk with them about that land in which she once felt no interest at all. That is a thoroughly normal way of acting. And something is wrong with the hearts or minds of people who can lose their dear ones by death and who feel no interest in what there is on the other side of death, or who can feel for a moment that their dear ones have gone into nothingness like a dog that dies.

Indeed I do not see how just for one's own sake a human being can live on from day to day with such a cheerless faith as that of a worldling, who has nothing to hope for beyond the grave. This is a frightfully monotonous and tiresome existence except as you have a hope of it issuing into something better and greater. Variety is the spice of life, we say. A dead sameness is killing. Most people know pretty well what will go on in their lives to-morrow, and the next day, and the next indefinitely. Sometimes the sameness of it gets on our nerves. And so it will continue. You will go on living

very much the same sort of life until you die. You will get up about the same time in the morning, go along the same streets to business, do the same kind of work, take the same street-cars and trains home in the evening as you have done for years, spend the evening as you do seven days in the week, go to bed, get up again when the alarm clock rings, and begin the old routine over again, day in and day out, year in and year out, no romance, no change, for forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years, and then a short sickness and a funeral, and a headstone. That is the way life goes, and it is a pretty gray sort of a thing if that is all. I imagine life is a bit drab to most people who are over fifty years of age, and there is only one thing that can redeem it from utter commonplaceness, and that is for a man to have an outlook into something beyond. It is tremendously true that where there is no vision people perish.

It may seem a foolish notion but I have always thought I should not like to live in an inland town. I have always preferred a seaport where there are lines of travel reaching out to all parts of the world. I have liked to go about the streets with the consciousness that I was in easy touch with other peoples and other lands. I watched with sustained interest the arguments that the representatives of the nations carried on at the close of the great war. The newspapers described it as a squabble, and spoke of it as though it was nothing but greed for territory that animated every man. It is true that those representatives of the nations were as fierce as tigers as they contended with each other. But it was not simple greed of land that made them so. We who live in a land open to all the world, with scores and scores of seaports and great rivers running to the sea from far inland, have no idea how people feel who are

surrounded by other and alien countries, how shut up, and cramped and smothered they are. The fight of these people was to get an outlet. Lands that were shut up wanted to get to the seaboard. Russia has been backward because other nations have kept her from the open sea. Give a nation that is shut up a single port and it will bring new life and hope to her people. She will get ships, her men will become sailors, her vessels will go freely to ports far and near carrying what she raises or manufactures, and bringing back the treasures of other lands. Her people will be transformed and enlarged by the outlet they have acquired. So if the soul is shut up by the boundaries of the little life we have here, we are poor creatures, indeed, and our lives are gray and cheerless. But if we have an outlook into another world beyond, so that we can send thoughts, and prayers and aspirations into it, and bring back inspiration, and comfort, and hope, then no matter how poor our circumstances or conditions of life are, life will be rich.

Christianity gives us this outlet that is needed to make life larger and better. It says that life in this world is only a beginning and that there is another life. After the grave life is continued without a break or a jolt. So surely is life there a continuation of the life here, that we are assured that our bodies are to be revived. "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth." "The earth and the sea shall give up their dead." In all ways we shall be identical persons with what we are here. Our friends will know us, and we shall know them, just as we recognize each other when we are separated only for a night. That is the assurance that Christianity gives. It is because you are Christians that you can say, "I believe in the resurrec-

tion of the body and the life everlasting." When you cease to be able to say that you cease to be Christian, for that faith is fundamental to Christianity.

Really since man's life is in every way larger and better when he cherishes a hope of a life beyond the grave it is reasonable to believe that God meant him to cherish that hope, and means to satisfy it. If man dies like a beast or a butterfly, then it is reasonable for him to live like a beast or a butterfly for that which is perishing and superficial. But men do not approve that sort of a life. Nobody considers it an admirable program for life to say, " Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die." Men have ideals for which they ought to live, and they admit that there are certain principles to which they ought to be obedient. And it seems to me that our Maker has deceived us if He has so made us that we must live according to high and noble principles that belong to a life that is above what is known to the creatures that belong to this world alone, and intends at the end to treat us just as He treats these creatures that are of the earth, earthy. Why should a being who is mortal simply, be expected to live as though he were immortal? There may be men who can find no evidence of design in nature, but thoughtful men never cease expecting to find the processes of nature to be self-consistent and rational. That is the thought that was in John Fiske's mind. He did not think about these things as you and I do, but he said in his lectures on *The Destiny of Man,* "I believe in the immortality of the soul, not in the sense in which I accept demonstrable truths of science, but as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's work."

For those who like the word of science we may say that scientific men are more ready to admit that there

may be another life than ever they were before. That keen-eyed skeptic, John Stuart Mill, admitted that. He said in his *Three Essays,* "There is no evidence in science against the immortality of the soul but that negative evidence which consists in the absence of evidence in its favour." That is a very different judgment indeed from that of men who have contended that science made a belief in immortality impossible and even ridiculous. Thomas Huxley said, "Science has not one shred of evidence that the soul does not live after death. When denial of it is made, it is sheer theory and assumption." America's foremost evolutionary philosopher, John Fiske, who died all too soon, delivered a course of lectures on *The Life Everlasting,* in which he argued earnestly for the immortality of the soul. Sir Oliver Lodge, who occupies the place that Huxley had in England for so many years, is a conspicuous advocate of the immortality of the soul. F. W. H. Myers, the President of the Society for Psychical Research, once said that in a hundred years everybody would believe in the resurrection of Christ, and so in the reality of life beyond the grave.

But our hearts are not satisfied with the best arguments that men can construct. We need the "surer word" about it that Plato so longed for. We need a revelation from heaven about it. And we have it. Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light. He died and rose again, and He said that because He lives we shall live also. He spoke with utter frankness of the life beyond the grave, and said that if it were not so He would have told us. And the Church has believed His assurances. Gibbon says that Christianity conquered Rome because its hope of immortality delivered its disciples from all fear of death. Macaulay says that

the hope of immortality changed the face of Europe because it shed a victorious tranquillity over those who saw the shadow of death closing about them. For more than nineteen hundred years the Christian Church has been sounding out this great declaration: "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." And so long as it believes that it will go on making conquests.

This hope of eternal life transforms for us our life here. We are right in saying that if we "have a hope" in Jesus Christ our eternal life is already begun. Life here for Christian people is a vastly different thing from what it is for children of the world. It has a different quality. It is a delightful thing to go about day by day with the conviction in your heart that you are going to live forever, and that the passage from this world to the next has nothing in it to fear. People sometimes look at me in blank amazement when I say that I expect to live forever and that I am going to have a much better time in the other world than I have here. But that is what I believe and I believe it confidently. I expect to have larger capacity there than here; things that drag on me here I shall be released from there; and things that make for peace and happiness will be multiplied there. And the basis of all my confident expectation is that Jesus Christ died and came back to life and showed that death can do us no harm, and He promised to prepare a place for us in the other world, and I feel sure that with all the power He has and with such love as He has for His people He will not give us anything mean. Sometimes as I sit and think of it I almost have a glimpse of the resplendent life into which death will usher us by and by. I have something of the curiosity that a child has on Christmas eve as to what wonderful

things it will have on the morrow. No one can conceive of what riches we shall enter into on that eternal morning. It hath not entered into the heart of man what God hath prepared for them that love Him. But you may be sure that for us who are heirs of Christ, that will be the most resplendent day of our existence, when we pass through the gates of death and enter into our inheritance. It will be joy unbounded, peace fathomless, life full of glory.

It has been God's habit from time to time to give His people such glimpses into that world of light as would encourage them to be faithful and hopeful in this life. Ezekiel had that blessed vision when he sat in exile by the River Chebar in Babylon. John had it when he was imprisoned for the Gospel's sake in the Isle of Patmos. Bunyan had it in Bedford Jail when he conducted his pilgrims along the way to the Celestial city, and saw the gates open to receive them and under the spell of its glory he said, "I wished myself among them." What a dreary world this would be if that heavenly door never had been opened so that its light might stream down into the darkness of this world!

I sat by the side of a young man in the West not long ago when I was coming from Denver to New York. He was a stranger to me, but I spoke to him about the eternal life. He said very positively, "I do not believe in such things. I never go to church." Then he paused a moment and said reflectively, "But I tell you I would not live in a place where there was no church." Of course he would not. Nobody who thinks would do so. What would a community be without the holy suggestions the church makes and the comforting assurances it gives? Men could not really live without the light of the Gospel. Children could not be light hearted; the

songs of the birds would lose their sweetness; the beauty would fade from the grass that covers the hillsides; the daisies that dance in summer meadows would lose their power to exhilarate us; the hearts of men would be desolate and human life would be hopeless, without that vision through the door into heaven which Jesus Christ opened for us by His resurrection from the dead. Bless God we have that vision, the vision of a world beyond this, the assurance of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. My own hope of it is bright and clear. Is yours? We have Christ's own word for it. Could we have better assurance?

X

CAN WE BELIEVE IN FUTURE PUNISHMENT?

"Who will render to every man according to his deeds."—ROMANS 2:6.

WHAT the character of that life is that comes after death, and whether anything that we can do affects its character, are questions of prime importance. They have been fascinating subjects of thought to the best men of every age. Infidels and agnostics have found them no less fascinating than Christian believers. And it is not simple curiosity that prompts men to think on these things. They are of tremendous practical importance. If there is another life, it surely is affected by this life, and however men may declaim against what they call other-worldliness; however they may suggest that we should live for one world at a time; yet they cannot deny that it is a natural instinct to order our lives in this world according to what we believe is to follow it. The penalties that we believe will follow wrong-doing, and the rewards that we believe will be given to the righteous are determining factors in our lives here. No other thought so profoundly affects the life of every man in the world as this.

When we think of the hereafter we are more concerned about the penalties than the rewards. Somehow the lost claim more of our attention than the saved. We are interested in those who stand at the right hand of the throne, but we are concerned for those who stand at the left. No matter where the good man is we know it is

well with him, and there is no need of anxiety on his behalf. But there is so much of mystery and dreadfulness shrouding the future of the bad man that our hearts are moved for him. Painful as it is to reflect on his lot, our thoughts will revert to it, and against our wills we ask questions about it.

No other part of Christian teaching has been so misunderstood and so grossly misrepresented as its teachings about future punishment. To some people that is about all the churches stand for. It is by no means an uncommon thing for a man to excuse himself from going to church by saying that he does not care to hear a man talk about hell. Such a man evidently thinks that a preacher has but a single theme and that an unwelcome one. And he is right in so far as he means that the thought of penalty and reward in some way underlies all that the preacher says. But that thought underlies all moral teaching wherever you find it. That thought underlies all the teaching of Jesus Christ. There were always the two sides to His teaching made unmistakably clear to His auditors, that acceptance of Him meant salvation, and rejection of Him meant destruction. And yet, if a man say that the pulpit of to-day has no message but a threatening of hell to wrong-doers, I am at a loss to know what church he has attended.

There was a time probably when the preaching of future punishment was over-emphasized. Jonathan Edwards filled his hearers with terror. He pictured God holding the sinner over the flames of hell as one might hold a noxious worm over a fire debating whether or not to drop it in. Or he represented God as sweeping sinners into perdition as a woman might sweep the carcasses of flies into the fire. Thought of future punishment was pushed by Edwards to the very verge of

hysteria. So it was with the Church in the mediæval period. The Church was to the people of the middle ages simply a place in which to take refuge from the wrath to come, and the teaching of coming retribution had then a place altogether out of right proportion to other truths. But that charge hardly can be made against the pulpit of to-day. Indeed we probably have shrunk too much from speaking of the penalty of sin. Mr. Gladstone said shortly before his death that our great peril is that we think there is nothing in God to fear. The bad man ought to be afraid of God. But the pulpit of to-day does not often remind him of it. We say with a loud voice that it will be well with the righteous, but our voice sinks to a whisper when we say that it will be ill with the wicked. We are in danger of becoming soft and nerveless, and of shutting our eyes to plain facts simply because they are stern and unpleasant. We ought surely in so serious a matter to be men enough to face the facts as they are, and we ought to be truthful enough to state all the facts as we find them. No one but a demon could find any delight in contemplating the dreadful punishment of the wicked. But a man is a traitor to his duty and an enemy to mankind, if he lets his sensibilities silence his lips when God bids him lift up his voice in warning.

There is no need at all to be ashamed of teaching in unmistakable terms that there is to be punishment for sin in the future. There is abundant reason to be ashamed of the pulpit that gives no such message. The pulpit that does not threaten punishment for sin is false to Bible teaching, and just as false to facts of life which any one can observe. There is such a thing as a sense of justice in a man's bosom. We are not satisfied when iniquity is winked at. We feel that the wrong-

doer ought to smart for his wickedness. If some miscreant wantonly injures your child the whole community feels that he ought to suffer for his misdeeds. It is a mawkish sentimentality that says that only those measures should be applied to him which would bring him to a better state of mind. One of the best signs of the coming of a better state of mind is for the culprit to feel that he ought to be punished. It is a thoroughly normal thing for people to feel that the wrong-doer should feel the sting of punishment for his misdeeds. That is not a spirit of vengefulness. It is a sense of justice demanding proper satisfaction. Any normal conscience approves that demand, even if we ourselves are the culprit.

Dr. Augustus H. Strong has told us of a remarkable scene in the court room at Plattsburg, N. Y. A trial for murder was near its close. The man on trial was a life convict who had struck down a fellow convict with an ax. After being out two hours the jury returned to ask the judge to explain to them the difference between murder in the first degree and murder in the second degree. The prisoner at once arose and said, "This was not murder in the second degree. It was a deliberate, premeditated murder. I know that I have done wrong; that I ought to confess the truth; and that I ought to be hanged." That man had a normal conscience. The jury brought in a verdict in accordance with what the prisoner said.

Some who are among us still will remember the case of Earl, the wife murderer. He thanked the jury that convicted him; declared the verdict just; begged that no one interfere with the course of justice; and said that the greatest blessing that could be conferred upon him would be to let him suffer the proper penalty for his crime.

Not very long ago the newspapers of Philadelphia told of a woman who had slain her betrayer. She was sentenced to a short term in prison. But when the sentence was pronounced she fell on her knees and begged the judge to send her to prison for life or else to hang her. Her conscience was thirsty for adequate punishment. And while judge and jury and the attorneys on both sides wept, she had to be fairly dragged from the court room. This is not fiction. It is reality. There is a sense of justice in every right-hearted man's bosom that demands that iniquity should be punished. That is not simply the teaching of the Bible. It is written just as plainly on the tablets of man's heart as it is on the pages of the sacred Book. The Christian preacher who ignores this truth throws away his power, and plays false to his God, to his own soul, and to his fellow men. I know very well how the mechanistic philosophies taught in our schools to-day deny the reality of conscience and seek to explain it away. But woe to human society when conscience is no more believed in!

Perhaps no part of Christian teaching has received such reinforcement at the hands of science as this doctrine of penalty. The teachings of science are terrifying to the man who thinks. Science says every deed has its inevitable sequel. The effect is sure to follow the cause. When we sin suffering is sure to follow. We hardly need a Bible to teach us that in these days. Every text-book on physiology teaches us that. The law is written plainly on nerve and brain. The drunkard does eat the fruit of his own devices. The libidinous man must look forward to a blighted old age. The never-resting man pays the penalty in shattered nerves. Nature is inexorable. She relentlessly forecloses the mortgage that our misdeeds have put upon us. Nature

thunders out even more loudly than the Bible does,—"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Infidel philosophers proclaim as plainly as any evangelical preacher can that "He who sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Some time ago when I preached a sermon on "The Wrath to Come," a man in the congregation, a visitor from New England, came to me as I descended from the pulpit and complimented me on my courage in preaching such a doctrine in these days. I replied that it took very little courage, indeed, to declare what is written so plainly in the Bible, and it took less courage still when that truth is declared not only by the Bible but with equal plainness by science and common sense. There is nothing in the world more certain than this; there is nothing that is so easily demonstrated as this, that sin brings its just penalty. "Though hand go in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished."

To get the clearest teaching there is on the subject of future punishment we must go to the words of Jesus Christ. I do not set aside the Old Testament because I do not regard it as authoritative for it is to me of equal authority with the New Testament. I am not silent about it because it has nothing to say about the punishment of the wicked in the world to come. It has much to say about it. Our friend and neighbour, Dr. Charles E. Jefferson, has said that "there is not a single picture in the Old Testament of anything that is going to happen on the other side of death." A single instance only is needed to refute that. Here it is. Daniel gives it to us. He says, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt." What a picture that is, how vivid, how terrifying! There are other

passages in the Old Testament that to me are equally explicit. But we do not need them. There is nothing said by prophet or preacher or psalmist in the Old Testament or by apostles in the New Testament, that is not said with even greater plainness and more terrible force by the Saviour. The most terrible things that ever were uttered in this world about the future punishment of the impenitent were said by Him who wept over the sinful city, and pitied the sinful woman, and portrayed the career of a sinful son in such tender words that the heart of the whole world has been moved by the recital. He never seems to have looked upon a sinner without compassion filling His breast, and He so yearned for the sinner's salvation that He took on Himself the burden of the sinner's guilt. And yet it was He who depicted the impenitent sinner's future in terms that shock our every sensibility. He says that the last estate of the sinner is like the valley of Hinnom, with its foul smoke ever rising, and its festering corruption ever seething. He besought men with tears in His eyes to undergo any mutilation of the body rather than risk the loss of the soul. He described with unspeakable sorrow how some by deliberate choice have so degraded their natures that they turn from the throne of judgment and go into fire that was prepared not for them, but for the devil and his angels. Think of the phrases which the Master uses to describe the sinner's woe,—the gnawing of an undying worm,—the scorching of an unquenchable fire,—weeping, the universal sign of grief,—gnashing of teeth, the sign of extreme disappointment and rage,—the outer darkness, with all the unknown horrors which it suggests. He speaks of the sinner being bound, of his suffering torments, of destruction and perishing. No language can possibly go beyond this. And if it be said

that all these phrases are but figures of speech, I should say that that of course is true. But figures of speech mean something. Indeed figures of speech are used here, I suspect, because the reality is so dreadful that plain speech can give no conception of the thing to be described.

I remember when I was a small boy attending a Sunday morning service in the lower part of Philadelphia in a little mission school. It was a very snowy, bitterly cold morning. There were but four of us present. These were the old sexton, one other man who was a member of the church, my father, and myself a boy of less than twelve years. We gathered about the heater that held a glowing fire. Somehow, perhaps because of the fire that glowed in the stove, the conversation turned to the future punishment of the wicked. The old question that once so troubled people was asked as to whether hell is literal fire. This man of whom I have spoken sat there looking into the stove. He had a grave thoughtful face. He was very wise in the things of the kingdom. He said quietly: "Not real fire, no, no. But it is something more dreadful still. For the substance is always weightier than the shadow it casts. The book I hold in my hand weighs more than the shadow it casts on the floor. Then if fire is the shadow of the punishment to come, what must the reality be!" Then he lapsed into silence as he continued gazing into the fire. I do not suppose that that man thought much of the impression he was making on the mind of the boy who sat listening to the conversation that day. But what he said gave me such a sense of the dreadfulness of sin and of the punishment it brings as has never left me since.

Well then, the first thing that is evident from the Saviour's teaching is that the punishment of sin is cer-

tain. There is no hesitation in the announcement. It is no guess. It is declared with authority. There are two gates, one narrow, the other wide; we can choose for ourselves which to enter. There are two roads, representing two modes of life; we can follow which of the two we please. There are two destinies toward one or the other of which we all are tending, one is life and the other destruction. The gate we enter, and the road we follow determine which of these two destinies is ours. Every man is master of his own ultimate fate.

Another thing which Christ makes clear is that the punishment of sin will be just. The judge of all the earth will do right. On earth the scales of justice are not always held with even hand. Men make mistakes. They are not impartial. They cannot see all the circumstances. Sometimes they are bribed to decide against the innocent and to let the guilty escape. But at the judgment bar of God justice will be perfectly administered. Every man will receive exactly what he deserves. Allowances will be made for ignorance. The servant who did not know his Lord's will is to be beaten with few stripes; the one who knew and was deliberately disobedient will have many stripes. "To whomsoever much is given, from him much will be required." Sometimes we have thought that a man who is lost is lost, and that is all there is to it. All those not saved, we have thought, are huddled together in one place in one condition of misery. But the Saviour says that penalties are graded. All are not alike in punishment, and all are not alike in reward. There is no such thing as favouritism in the final awards. Nothing is the result of whim or impulse. Punishment is in no sense arbitrary. It is not something that God puts upon the sinner. It is something that the sinner brings upon himself. Really it is not so much a

penalty as a consequence. The process that goes on in the garden when a man sows his seed and by and by gathers the appropriate harvest is not more natural than the punishment that will come to each sinner. We get what our character entitles us to. We reap what we have sown. The character we make in this world we carry into the other world.

Some have said that death changes us. It was once believed by a large body of people that death so transforms a man that no matter what a man has been in this world as soon as he dies he goes as straight to heaven as an arrow shot from a bow. But the mere fact of dying makes no change in one's character. The same laws of character prevail on the other side of the river of death as prevail here, just as the same laws of gravitation prevail on both sides of the East River. It is possible, I believe, that in the last hour a soul may be so transformed by a sight of Christ that he is changed from a sinner into a saint. That is rare, but it is possible. But it is not the experience of death that makes the change. It is a sight of Christ that does it. The same power that converts a man in full vigour of life may change him when his life is ebbing away. But ordinarily character goes on with increasing momentum toward its chosen place. Hell is not so much a place into which the soul is plunged as a condition that the soul has made for itself. The old coloured woman was entirely right when on being told that there would not be brimstone enough to burn all the sinners, she said, "Ah, honey, you takes your brimstone with you."

There are some who contend that sin is sufficiently punished in this world. But no one who knows very much of this life could entertain any such notion. Some sins do come to their fruitage quickly, it is true.

But others are very slow in reaching maturity. Drunkenness and lust hurry men to disaster, though it must be admitted that even they do not bring upon the men who indulge in them as poignant suffering as upon the innocent people who are their victims. And there are many forms of sin like greed and cruelty, and vanity, and frivolity, that do not react at once in sorrow upon the soul that indulges them. They need a long time to reach their end. Some seed sprouts and reaches full development in a plant and bears seed in a single season. Other seeds take a man's lifetime to mature. So it is with sin. "Some men's sins go before them unto judgment, others follow after."

I have read of a man in the Southwest who was a member of the legislature. He had always been respected. He was taken sick. When he knew that he was going to die he sent for a lawyer. Then on his death bed he made a confession. Thirty years before he had been the cashier in a certain bank. He stole a small sum of money. He speculated with it. He was successful. But before he could replace the amount of money he had taken he was suspected. One night he found the president of the bank going over his books. He killed the man then and there. Going out into the street he met a young man, not much more than a boy, who was employed at the bank to sweep out the place and to do necessary errands. He gave the young man his keys and sent him to the bank to get some article for him. A moment later he met a friend of his and said to him, "I am afraid there is something wrong at the bank." They entered the building together. They found this boy leaning over his prostrate employer. They threw themselves upon him. In the struggle the boy's garments were stained with blood. Everything was against

the lad. He was tried for murder and convicted. He was hanged. His mother died from the shock. His father died in grief. But this guilty man lived on and prospered. He showed no sign of penitence. He made money. He became the president of the bank. He was elected to the legislature. He was honoured and respected. He suffered no check to his ambition until the disease fastened on him that took him off. Did his death wipe out his guilt, do you think? Did the mere passage through the dark valley that we all must pass through set right the iniquity against that innocent boy? Did the mere experience of dying usher him happy into the presence of the employer whom he had murdered? In the face of such incidents as that, which are not so infrequent as we think, is there any one who can claim that the punishment of sin is exhausted in this life?

In this world Dives rolls in luxury; Lazarus sick and sore begs at the gate. Luxurious neglect on one side, and want on the other continue to the very moment of death. Is there to be no righting of such conditions in the other world? Nero wore purple, drank wine cooled with snow, slept and caroused in a palace. Paul ate crusts, wore poor garments, slept and languished in a dungeon. So far as suffering in this life is concerned Paul seems to have had a monopoly of it. Nero suffered little or none. Is Nero to share in the other world the same bliss that Paul has because sin is sufficiently punished in this world? What folly such a notion is, to be sure! Can such different characters as George Washington and Benedict Arnold, Abraham Lincoln and John Wilkes Booth walk arm in arm through eternity? Oh no! if, as the Saviour declares, character decides where a man shall go in the future world, then there must be a great gulf fixed between the evil and the good,

the godly and the wicked, the blood-washed penitent and the stubborn impenitent. Each man goes to his own place. The tares and the wheat grow together here, but there they are separated. All sorts of fish are taken up in one net, but the good are saved and the bad are thrown away. Characters are as far apart as heaven and hell. The destinies to which they go must be as widely separated.

We are sure to ask ourselves as we think on this subject, how great a proportion of people are to be saved, and how many lost. We have no means of knowing. A man in Christ's congregation once asked Him, "Are there few that be saved?" Christ answered, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will strive to enter in and shall not be able." He meant to say that those who ask such a question as that are busying themselves with things that do not concern them. Their proper business is to struggle for their own salvation. Many things which we should like to know we are not told. Nothing is said about the good men in other lands who had little opportunity to know the full truth about Jesus Christ, such as Marcus Aurelius. We are not told just how the great Judge will deal with those who die in distant lands before they have had any chance to hear of the Saviour. Christ is extremely practical. He discourages speculation. He bids us look well to ourselves, and not to indulge our curiosity about other people.

And then there is that other great question about how long the penalty will last. A big volume might be written about that. Good men have differed about it. Some have felt encouraged to hope that by and by all would be restored to the Father's house. Theodore Parker believed that the time would come when the last prodigal

would return and be welcomed home. That, however, is mere speculation. I should not like to encourage any one to build his hope of everlasting life on a human guess. Some have said that by and by the soul would utterly die; that when the penalty has been fully paid the spirit would become extinct. That is another guess. The Saviour gives us no way to answer such a question. Unless we give an unwarranted twist to the words of the Lord Jesus we are compelled to say that the impenitent sinner is left there in the outer darkness. There is no end to the penalty that we can discern. It may wring our hearts to say it, but we may not be wise above what is written. This much is certain, that if there is any way to save those who are in perdition, God will save them. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He would that all should repent and be saved. But He cannot save a man who refuses to be saved, and it may be that the soul that can resist all the pleadings of the Saviour in this world so hardens itself that there is no possible recovery for it. At any rate no one can resist the conviction that the New Testament teaches that our state is fixed when we pass out of this world. No one can pass either way. The tares are burned, and we have no word about their being gathered together again and transformed into wheat. The worthless fish are thrown away, and we have no hint that they are gathered up again. The tree is cut down, and so it remains. What is right God will do, and we can safely leave all our unanswered questions to Him.

XI

CAN WE BELIEVE IN OUR LORD'S RETURN TO THE EARTH?

"This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." —Acts 1:11.

THE greatest day in past history was the day when the Lord Jesus came into the world the first time. The greatest day in future history will be the day when the Lord Jesus will come into the world the second time. If we may judge of the importance of the day by the number of times it is mentioned in the Bible, the day of our Lord's return is the supremely important day of all history. In the 260 chapters of the New Testament there are said to be 318 clear allusions to our Lord's return. If you divide the New Testament into blocks one verse in twenty-five has to do with the "second coming." If you take the two epistles to the Thessalonians, the part of the New Testament that deals especially with this great subject, you will find that one verse in every four refers directly to the Master's return.

Whenever the second coming of our Lord is spoken of, some people look askance, and display nervousness, and shrug their shoulders as though they disbelieve the whole thing, or if they believe it, feel that we know very little about it, and that it is of small importance anyhow. There are some who smile as though it were a bit of hare-brained folly. And a few are a bit spite-

ful about it. I have heard of a Christian minister who said in a sermon of his, "I hate that doctrine that Christ will come back to the earth." When John the apostle thought of it he said: "Even so come, Lord Jesus." But this man mentioned it only to say: "I hate it." When Paul spoke of the crown that awaited him he said that Christ would give such a crown to all who love His appearing. Do you look forward with eager fondness to His appearing, or have you said as this unworthy servant of Christ did: "I hate the thought of it"? Surely it ill becomes us to disparage what God emphasizes, and what God has taken pains to make known to us deserves our most earnest efforts to understand, and it will be for our spiritual profit to contemplate.

There is no possibility of mistaking the attitude of Christian people in New Testament times. All of them were looking forward with eager expectancy. No matter whether they were in Jerusalem or in Rome; whether they were old disciples or young; had long experience or were new converts, they had this characteristic in common, they were earnestly looking for the return of their Lord. That is so marked that any one who should read the New Testament for the first time would get the impression that the very next event to happen would be the coming of Christ. It was the dominant thought in their minds always. No one can read the epistles even superficially without discerning this. Open to the Thessalonians and you find their conversion described as "a turning to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." Open to Corinthians and you find Paul telling them that they come behind in no gift "waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." Look in Galatians and you

find Paul saying, "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness." In Philippians we hear him saying, "Our conversation is in heaven whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have it said, "Christ also, having been offered for our sins, shall appear the second time, apart from sin to them that wait for him." The personal purity and devotion of the believer were looked upon as a preparation for the coming of the Lord. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." John puts the same thing in his peculiarly tender way. He says, "And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence and not shame at his coming." Paul exhorts Timothy to fidelity in view of that day. He says, "Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." Peter, in the same way, writes to his fellow-elders, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, and when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

A hope that was so cherished by the early Christians surely ought not to be banished from the life of the Church to-day. It is unfair to the world to do it, for the world has a right to the full proclamation of the Gospel. It is unfair to the Church, for Christian people have a right to the inspiration and comfort that come from this great hope.

This is certainly true, that the thought of coming back to the earth was very dear to Jesus Christ. He often spoke of it. I think we may fairly say that the announcement of His second coming brought about His

condemnation. When the high priest asked Him whether He was the Christ, the Son of God, He replied, "Yes. And hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." That was enough. The moment they heard that they accused Him of blasphemy and condemned Him to death, just because He said that He was the Christ and they would have the proof of it in His coming to earth again in glory.

Some who have not liked the Bible's teaching about our Lord's return have tried to explain it away. Dr. William N. Clarke in his *Outline of Theology,* which was lauded by some as the sanest systematic theology that had appeared for a generation, said that the Lord had already come back to the world in the gift of the Holy Spirit. But may God pity us if all the gorgeous promises about our Lord's return are already accomplished and we did not know it! Any one who reads the last talk of the Lord Jesus with His apostles can see that He there promises two distinct things. He promises to send the Holy Spirit, and He promises that He Himself will return. He says, "I will return to you," and then as a distinct promise He says, "I will send him (the Holy Spirit) unto you." And what folly it is to say that the Lord fulfilled the promise of His second coming and the apostles should not have known it, and Peter and John and Paul should have gone on hoping for the Lord's return and exhorting the people to watch for it when it was all over. To believe such a thing as that is of the same nature as Mrs. Eddy's declaration that Christ returned in 1866 and nobody knew it but herself; or of the so-called Pastor Russell that Christ returned in 1874 and nobody but Pastor Russell knew it. What nonsense this is surely!

Some have said that the Lord's coming means simply our death. The New Testament teaches no such thing as that. When a Christian dies it is spoken of as his going to the Lord, not as the Lord's coming to him. There certainly is a difference between these things. Can you apply to death all the sweet words which the New Testament uses when it speaks of the coming of our Lord? The apostles never dreamed of confusing these things. Jesus said to Peter about John by the Sea of Galilee, "If I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee?" The apostles took Him to mean that John would not die. Paul says that those who have died before Christ's return shall rise from the dead that they and the living disciples may meet and greet Him together. And then too, death comes to one person at a time. But when the Lord returns it is to be for all the world at once. His coming is to be like the light, shining from the east to the west.

Peter clearly foretold the coming of these days of unbelief. He says, "There shall come in these last days scoffers walking after their own lusts and saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as from the beginning of creation.'" That is the cry of unbelief which we hear to-day.

Christ, however, did His best to keep alive our faith in His coming. He so arranged it that we cannot celebrate His dying love without at the same time professing our faith that He is coming back to us. The Lord's Supper is a blessed ordinance, but it is a temporary one, and not intended to be perpetual. It will cease to be celebrated when our absent Lord is with us once more. The Saviour's words are, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show forth his death till he

come." Dr. B. H. Carroll has well said that men who have ceased to believe in our Lord's personal, audible, and visible return ought to stop coming to the Lord's Supper.

Any one who takes his New Testament and studies it will find that we have it clearly promised there that the Lord Jesus is to return in person. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again," He says. The "I" that went is the "I" that will return. "This same Jesus which is taken into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." That seems clear enough. He ascended personally, and He must descend in the same fashion if words have any meaning. Thank God we have so clear a word as this of the text, "This same Jesus shall come." It is worth our while to give emphasis to these words by pausing and reflecting upon them. "This same Jesus." We may have had a creeping fear that when we see Him He would be so transformed that we might not know Him, that He would have no marks about Him by which we could identify Him as the Saviour who died for us. I confess that I long to see the same Jesus who was here on earth. My eyes are hungry for a sight of the Jesus Christ who was born as a babe in Bethlehem, who obeyed as a child in Nazareth, who as a man trudged about Judea and Galilee, who was set at nought in Jerusalem, who suffered in Gethsemane, who died on Calvary's cross, who lay in the tomb and came out of it alive, and ascended from Olivet. None of us wishes to see the glorified Christ alone, so transfigured that even His own original disciples would not know Him. We wish Him to be so identical with the Christ who was full of grace and truth on earth that as soon as our glance falls on Him we shall say with hearts full of

emotion, and with every demand of our minds fully satisfied, " That is He and none other!

> 'In His hands and feet are wound prints
> And His side.' "

"This same Jesus shall return," the angels said.

And again the apostle John says that He will return visibly. "Every eye shall see him." The word "see," when it is used alone, sometimes means simply to perceive. The mind may see things that are invisible to the eye of the body. But I do not recall any place where the word "see" can have a figurative meaning where it is used with the word "eye." And when we are told that "every eye shall see him," it means that when He returns His presence shall be a visible presence. We have a threefold assurance from His own lips. He told His disciples that they should see Him. He told His enemies that they should see Him. He told the high priest that he should see Him coming in the clouds of heaven.

He is to return suddenly. Once when Newman Hall was preaching he said that he knew of no reason why Christ should not come before he finished his sermon. That is the sort of suddenness that Christ says will mark His return. He says, "As the days of Noah were, so shall the day of the Son of Man be; they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and the flood came and took them all away." "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord shall come." "As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." When He came at first, He came quietly and unobtrusively. No one knew of His coming except a few poor shepherds. All the rest of the

world went on its careless way without a notion that its Redeemer had been born. Even at the time of His death He was not known outside of His own little country. The kingdom He founded has come into prominence as quietly and as slowly as an oak grows to maturity. But it will not be so in His second coming. That will be as conspicuous as His first advent was obscure. He will burst upon an unbelieving world with a brightness that makes the sun pale, and with a footfall "louder than a thousand thunders." His first coming was like the breaking of day, gradual and silent. His second coming will be like the breaking of a thunderstorm, sudden and startling as the lightning flashes from the sky.

There are people who tell us that the whole world must be converted before the Lord comes. When will that be? There are more heathen born every year than we have converts. We are not catching up very fast. We have not converted any whole town in America yet. Christ did not say that every soul must be converted before He comes back. That would not be coming suddenly. On the contrary Christ says that the tares and the wheat shall grow together until He comes in judgment. And once He asked, "When the Son of Man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?"

He is to come gloriously, too. The first time He came He was poor, and in the eyes of men inglorious. He was the child of a young peasant woman. His first crib was a rude manger. His first robes were the swaddling clothes of poverty. Instead of the ringing of bells and the shouting of heralds by which royal births are announced, there were the lowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep whose stable the lowly parents had invaded. But it will not be so in His second coming. He

will then be accompanied by ten thousand of His saints. He will be clothed with omnipotence. He will ride in chariots of glory. He will be heralded by trumpet blasts that will wake the dead. And in the very places where He once was derided and shamed and dishonoured and counted unworthy to live, His beauty will be seen, His worth shall be sung, and His name shall be exalted above every name.

The time of His coming is not revealed to us. Robert McCheyne once asked his friends, "Do you think Christ will come before night?" One after another said, "I think not." Then he solemnly repeated the text, "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." Christ Himself said, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons." When you see those words, "It is not for you to know" attached to anything by the Master Himself it is wise to let it alone. Who are we that we should undertake to ferret out what God has determined to hide? And why should any one be so foolish as to insist on knowing what God does not wish to tell us? Just as soon as we begin to apply our small rules of arithmetic so as to fix the date of our Lord's return we lose our way. We are distinctly told that the time is not to be given to us, and the reason for it is just as clearly intimated, that we may be in a constant attitude of watching. "Watch ye, therefore" are the significant words used. Some one has described our Lord's return as "imminent," and then has defined "Imminent" as meaning "Liable to come at any time, and certain to come at some time." There could not possibly be a better presentation of New Testament teaching. The Saviour may keep us waiting for His second advent as He kept His ancient people waiting for His first advent. They waited for Him four thou-

sand years, and when He came they were not ready for Him. His Church has been waiting for His second coming for nearly two thousand years, and there is great danger that when He comes we shall be taken by surprise once more.

The fact of His coming is put beyond dispute for all who will accept God's Word. There is no hesitation in the announcement. It is not given as a probability. The promise is not made as a possible thing depending for its fulfillment on certain other things being done. It is not "perhaps He will come." It is "Behold He cometh." There is no other event that is so frequently and emphatically proclaimed. From Enoch down to the last apostle the uniform declaration is, "The Lord shall come with ten thousand of his saints." The Bible is full of it. It is not simply hinted at in an occasional text; it is dogmatically declared hundreds of times. We need no other assurance than His word, for when our Lord says He will do a thing we may be confident that He will do it.

This promise that the Saviour will return in glory to this world is very satisfying to all our instincts as to what is right and appropriate. We like to see things come to completeness. Flowers that wither before they bloom, wheat that never heads, orchards that never get beyond the blossom, fruit that rots before it ripens, men of genius who never achieve, institutions that never get beyond the program of their initiation, we turn from all these things with a sense of bitter disappointment. We would rather have a small promise redeemed than a great one unredeemed.

Every thoughtful man feels that the career of our Lord in this world is not complete. Our hearts and minds demand something more of a climax than the

resurrection, after which He appeared only to His own, followed by a quiet ascension. As far as they go they are well enough, but they fall short of what we feel is an appropriate consummation of the Saviour's work. And it does not meet the case to say that Christianity is a plant whose roots are in this world but its full fruition is in heaven; that it is a building whose foundations are here, but the capstone in the other world; that its beginnings we have with us, and its consummation is somewhere else. We somehow feel that what is begun here should have its completion here. We feel that since the Lord achieved His salvation in this world, the full results and glory of it should be witnessed in the very place where they were so laboriously wrought out. And the Bible approves this way of thinking. It tells of the time when the Lord Jesus shall return to this world and crown with glory the work of the redemption that He began in tears and blood; when He shall restore the harmony that sin turned into discord; when the works of the devil shall be destroyed and the work of salvation shall issue in glory everlasting. It is very satisfying to our hearts to think that there is coming a time when the Lord Jesus will be vindicated in the very world where He suffered, and that where His cross stood His throne will be set up.

What is the use of this doctrine? It ought to impel us to activity. If our Lord is to return we naturally would strive to be diligent during His absence. If He is likely to return at any time we are apt to be perpetually diligent so that whenever He comes He will find us ready for Him. And yet we must admit that sometimes the reverse of this is the effect. Like the apostles to whom the angels spoke in the text we are sometimes so taken up with gazing into heaven that

we forget our duties on earth. We are more prone to dreaming than to doing. We delight in visions rather than tasks. We imagine that the Christian life is made up of sanctified leisure instead of sanctified drudgery. We indulge wishes to fly away and be at rest, instead of bestirring ourselves and going out to do our work. We need to remember that the Christian life is no mere reverie about spiritual things. Only a very small part of our experience is made up of lying on Jesus' bosom. That delight belongs to heaven. Toil is our lot on earth. Christianity is not a sentimental trance, but incessant, intense labour. The Christian life is active rather than contemplative. We need to recall our hands from idleness and our minds from spiritual woolgathering, and busy them both with the work of a world's redemption. The Christian's business on earth is not to be idly peering into the sky for a glimpse of his returning Lord but to follow that Lord's example on earth as he goes about doing good.

I suppose that the angels gave this promise to the apostles not so much by way of rebuke as by way of comfort. These bereaved men stood gazing at the place in the clouds where the Saviour had entered. They had an unspeakable sense of loss. Perhaps they were thinking they had lost Him forever. We do not know how long they stood there. But so far as we can see they were riveted to the place and God had to send His angels to arouse them from their reverie, and those angels brought them the comforting message, "He has gone, but he will return." That hope was intended to lighten every trial, and to sweeten every duty. It did that for them. It has done that for us. The blessed assurance that the Lord will return to His own has stood God's people in good stead in every age. In times of pros-

perity and worldly ease men may have lost their grip on this doctrine, but in times of distress and danger and persecution they have laid hold on it and gotten inspiration and strength from it to do better.

Certainly the great leaders who created new epochs in Christian history did not hold this doctrine lightly, but cherished it as their one great hope. Martin Luther, in the midst of the turmoil attending the Reformation, wrote, "I ardently hope that amidst these internal dissensions on earth Jesus Christ will hasten the day of His coming." The acute and learned John Calvin saw that this was the Church's true hope and he said, "We must hunger after Christ till the dawning of the great day when our Lord will fully manifest the glory of His kingdom. The whole family of the faithful will keep in view that day." Even the intrepid soul of John Knox was upheld by this hope. He wrote to a friend in England, "Has not the Lord Jesus in spite of Satan's malice carried up our flesh into heaven? And shall He not return? We know He shall return, and that with expedition." John Wesley declared that wickedness should prevail until Christ comes to reign on earth. Charles Wesley, hymnologist of the Methodist Church, who has cheered the whole world by his sacred melodies, wrote:

> "Trusting in the literal word,
> We look for Christ on earth again;
> Come, our everlasting Lord,
> With all Thy saints to reign."

It was the unceasing prayer of Richard Baxter who wrote *The Saints' Everlasting Rest.* He wrote, "Hasten, O my Saviour, the time of Thy return. Send forth Thine angels, and let the dreadful, joyful trumpet sound. Thy desolate bride saith, 'Come, even so, come,

Lord Jesus.' '' These all died, not having received the promise. But if we would follow in the footsteps of these great men of the Church we must cherish the hope that sustained them in their trials and was the inspiration for all the work they did.

You are familiar with the picture of the maiden standing on the shore looking out over the sea and waving her handkerchief in welcome to her returning lover. He had been absent from her many a long day. She had watched for his coming until hope deferred made her heart utterly sick. Sometimes she saw a distant sail that she fancied was his. But it passed on and her hopes vanished with it. Many a time she arose in the morning murmuring to herself, ''Surely he will come today,'' only to watch vainly during the long hours until night came, and she lay down worn out with her disappointment. But at last the day she had prayed for came. She saw the gleam of the sail as soon as it appeared above the horizon. On it came, her hopes rising with its approach. Her faithfulness and patience were at last to have their appropriate reward. As the vessel drew near she thought she could descry her lover standing in the forward part of it looking as anxiously for her as she was looking for him. She ran at once to a conspicuous place on the promontory, and while her heart beat fast with love and her eyes were filled with tears of gladness, she waved to her lover the white symbol of her welcome home. So the Church watches for her absent Lord, often with fainting heart because His coming is so long delayed. But some day our waiting will be rewarded, for our Lord will not disappoint His waiting bride. Perhaps before long a day will dawn that has no ending, for it will be the beginning of the eternal day. Or it may be that He will come in the long watches

of the night. We shall hear the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." Those who are His will arise and hasten away, and the tired old world, though it hears the excitement, will have no notion of the glad hopes that are at last finding their fulfillment. Or it may be that neither at midnight nor at high noon He will come. No man knoweth the hour. It may be in the morning when the sunshine awakes us that we shall find ourselves enswathed by that light that never was on land or sea. Or it may be at the close of the day that He will come. We shall be meditating on our day's work and on the mercy of our God, when lifting our eyes, lo! our Beloved will be standing before us. Whenever He comes may we be found watching!

There is no denying that we are eager for our Lord's return. We sigh because He delays. But when I am disposed to be impatient that the Lord does not hasten His coming, I ask myself whether there is not a good reason for the delay. There is a tremendous reason. Why did Christ not come yesterday? Why did He not come with the morning light to-day? He tells us why. He says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness; but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And yet in the face of that we chide our Lord that He has delayed His coming! If He had come yesterday some who will be saved to-day would have been lost. If He should come to-day, your friend or neighbour, or some one of your dear ones would be lost. He delays His coming and you thereby have a chance to be the messenger of grace to that unsaved one whom you love. The only thing that keeps our Lord from bursting at once on the world's astonished gaze is His *desire* that more of the lost

should be saved. For after He comes no more appeals will be made to the unsaved; no more prayers will ascend for them to a throne of grace. All who at that time are unsaved will remain unsaved forever. That is a good reason for delay, isn't it? Can you be impatient because He does not come in the face of such a reason for delay as that? But though His coming is delayed, He will come. He promised it. He will come. Watch for Him. Be ready to greet Him.

"So I am watching quietly, every day
Whenever the sun shines brightly
I rise and say,
'Surely it is the shining of His face'
And look upon the gates of His high place
Beyond the sea.
For I know He is coming shortly
To summon me.

"And when a shadow falls across the window
of my room,
Where I am working my appointed task,
I lift my head to watch the door and ask
If He is come.
And then the angel answers sweetly in my home,
'Only a few more shadows
And He will come.'"

XII

THE ALMIGHTINESS OF FAITH

"Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say to this mountain 'Remove to yonder place' and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you."—MATTHEW 17: 20.

ANY one reading the New Testament who comes on this verse is sure to stop and think it over, and then read it again. It seems at first as though we must have misread it. We hardly can believe our eyes. But reading it the second time does not reduce its meaning in the least. It rather makes it evident that the words were carefully chosen. To start with, it was Jesus Christ who spoke the words, and He never was a careless talker. And He introduces what He says about the power of faith by the impressive phrase, "Verily, I say unto you," which is a clear announcement that He has most carefully considered what He is saying. And besides in the short compass of that single verse He gives the same assurance twice, once in picturesque language and once in plain speech. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say to this mountain 'Remove to yonder place' and it shall remove." If that was all He said we might declare simply that He was speaking in figurative language and let it go at that. But then, lest we should not get what He means, He puts it into plain words, "Nothing shall be impossible to you." How incredible it all seems! What an air of unreality this verse has about it in such a world as this where so often, as Maarten Maartens says, "Men struggle and struggle, and it all ends in nothing."

And then this is not the only time that Christ made this remarkable statement. Four chapters further on in this book of Matthew He says the same thing again. Here in the text He was talking to His disciples who could not cast the demon out of the afflicted child. He pointed to Mount Hermon on whose side they stood and He said, "If you only had faith you could say to this mountain, 'Remove,' and it would remove." In the other instance He was explaining to His disciples the withering of the fig tree at His word and He said, "Do not be surprised at this," and then pointing at Mount Olivet which was just at hand, He said, "Have faith, and do not doubt and ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but ye shall say to this mountain, 'be thou removed and be thou cast into the depths of the sea,' and it shall be done." And then Luke speaks of the time when he declared that faith as a grain of mustard seed could pluck up a sycamine tree by the roots and plant it in the sea.

Clearly enough we cannot get rid of this amazing declaration of the Master. He made it so often and so emphatically that the disciples could not forget it, and they have put it down for us as plainly as words ever were put in black ink on white paper. But what shall we do with the verse? We may wish it was not there, but it is there. We cannot deny it. Jesus Christ said it. So far as I know nobody whose opinion is at all worth considering denies that we have here a real saying of Jesus Christ. But we have to admit being puzzled by it. Commentators have little or nothing to say about it. Plain people reading their Bible look at it hopelessly and pass it by.

Very often you can learn the meaning of a thing by trying it out in a practical test. But most of us have

been afraid to put this text to the test. Not that we fear it might prove itself true and we should remove some mountain from its base, and we be involved in unfortunate complications. But we are afraid it would prove itself false and all our faith would come down in collapse. We are afraid of repeating the oft-told experience of the old woman who had a mountain in front of her cottage door. It was a great annoyance to her, and she resolved on the authority of this verse to pray it out of the way. So one night before she went to bed she prayed the Lord very earnestly that in the morning the mountain should be gone. Then she went to sleep. When she awoke in the morning she crept cautiously to the door and opened it. Things were just as they always had been. Not a boulder was changed from its position. The old woman blurted out, "It isn't gone, and I knew it wouldn't be." To be sure that was not a fair test. Hers was not a mountain-moving faith. Mark says "We must not doubt." The word that Mark uses Paul uses in Romans 4:20, where he says that Abraham "staggered not" at the promise, and it is used also by James where he says that those who ask for wisdom must ask in faith "nothing wavering." We seem to be unable to summon up that unwavering, that unstaggering faith. We have not faith enough to put the promise to a real test. And so we pass it by wondering what it can mean anyhow, and the promise that was intended to be an inspiration and a comfort to us proves to be our bewilderment and our despair.

I often wish that people would handle the Bible naturally and let it talk to them as other books do. We should not be perplexed by it so often if we did that. I often wish that men would remember that when Christ spoke He did not use the stilted phrase of the academies,

but He talked as the average man of the street does. His meaning would be clear then where now we are puzzled or troubled by it. Christ's address was saturated by the homely wit of the people. He often made His appeals to the crowd in the very phrases that were frequently on their own lips. He never was dull and prosaic. The Scribes and the Pharisees were. They were always making a show of their learning, and a show of learning for its own sake is always stupid and dull.

Now with this in mind let us take the text bit by bit and look at it. First, Christ speaks of faith "as a grain of mustard seed." I have heard men speak of the strength of a mustard seed as though that were the point. Oh no! Christ had the smallness of the seed in mind. He wanted to use in His illustration the smallest thing He could think of. And the mustard seed was the common people's symbol of smallness. They were country people He was talking to. They knew about seeds. And as soon as the great Teacher looked at them reproachfully and said, "If your faith was as big as a grain of mustard seed," they would know what He meant. Some man who has studied astronomy says, "This world of ours is but a speck of dust floating in space." We do not take him literally. It really is a world of some size, but compared with a world a hundred thousand times its size it is as nothing. We speak of a man who has a small way of looking at things and we express our contempt of him by saying, "That man is as big as a peanut." We say of some stingy wretch, "He is so small that you would need a microscope to find him." And on the other hand we say of some generous fellow, "He has a heart as big as an ox." When we use such phrases nobody is puzzled. Nobody

but a hopeless fool would take us literally. Why, then, cannot we allow Christ to use in talking to us the same sort of language that we are accustomed to use in talking with one another, and not try to put mysterious meanings into His every-day speech?

To be sure, that is the easiest part of the text. Perhaps it was unnecessary to dwell on it at all. The puzzling thing to us is the unlimited power which Christ attributes to a little faith. He was full of emotion as He stood there. He sympathized with the sorrowing father. He pitied the suffering boy whose father sought his healing. He was grieved at the impotent disciples. And as He stood in the midst of that distracted throng, He waved His hand toward Hermon at whose foot they stood, and said, "If you only had faith, just a little real faith, you could say to this mountain 'Get out of the way,' and it would go." They did not misunderstand Him. The words fell naturally from His lips. They had Oriental minds that were used to soaring, and were not held down to earth by such prosaic habits as often enchain us. They knew that He meant that if they had real faith they could do things that were looked upon as impossibilities, and that what were obstacles insuperable to other men would vanish at their word.

Ever since men have been able to think they have used mountains in a figurative sense. I had in my childhood a little book that was a perpetual delight to me. It had pictures in it made by John Tenniel, the famous illustrator for the London *Punch*. One of them was the picture of a mountain with a little mouse sitting on the side of it. There could be seen a little hole out of which the mouse had come. The mountain was shrouded in smoke as though it was in convulsion. Underneath the picture were the words, "The mountain groaned

and brought forth a mouse." The book will be easily recognized as Æsop's Fables. Æsop amused and instructed and enraged men by the fables he told more than five hundred years before Christ spoke of this mountain moving off at the order of the man who is full of faith. Men never have been at a loss to know what Æsop meant by this fable of the groaning mountain. They knew that he meant to set forth tremendous struggle with little result.

It was a common thing for the Jews of Christ's day to speak of any mighty man as a mover of mountains. Colonel Roosevelt would have been so spoken of. Marshall Foch would have deserved to be, for surely in the World War, mountain-like difficulties were obliterated at his command. Napoleon Bonaparte was a mover of mountains. When Napoleon was planning to cross the mountains to attack Italy he was reminded that the Alps were impassable, and that intrepid man waved his hand and said, "There shall be no Alps." Nobody misunderstood him. That is precisely what Christ meant. He said, "If a man has but faith he can put mountains out of the way." Do not be bewildered by such a statement as that. Thank God for the assurance it gives you when you are beset by difficulties that threaten to defeat you in your purposes.

Now what shall we do with the last sentence of the text, "And nothing shall be impossible to you"? Of course we must not be literalists in trying to get its meaning, either. That statement is not true literally even of God. A little maid once asked, "Can God tell a lie?" The Bible uses that very word "impossible" concerning that. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "It was impossible for God to lie." And in writing to Titus Paul speaks of "God who cannot

lie." We never say of God as the Germans said of the State, "Nothing is wrong for the State." We say rather, "The Judge of all the earth must do right." There are moral limitations even on God, and there are physical limitations on God also. Dr. Henry G. Weston, so long the president of Crozer Seminary, used to say smilingly to his classes that even God could not make an old table. Of course He could not. He is limited in what He does by the nature of things, that is by the character of His own being. So it need not surprise us that the statement "Nothing shall be impossible" to the man of faith is not to be taken literally.

There is nothing that we need more in the interpretation of Scripture than common sense. And if we have but common sense there is little Scripture that we cannot understand. This sentence "Nothing shall be impossible to you" is paralleled by things we see every day. I was called on the telephone some time ago by a business man who made of me an inquiry about the ability of a man whom I know very well. He said, "Isn't he a dreamer?" I said, "He is not a mere dreamer. He does dream great things, but more than any man I know he brings his dreams to pass. He can achieve the impossible. When he undertakes to do a thing, he never lets go until it is done and well done." That is what Christ meant to say faith can do. If a man has faith in his project and will stick at his job, and in spite of all discouragements will go on, nothing in the world will defeat him. The famous Frenchman, Mirabeau, when he was told that a certain plan of his was impossible said, "Impossible! speak not to me of that blockhead of a word." The elder Pitt after some one had told him that a certain thing he had planned could not be done replied, "Can't be done? Impossible? I trample

on impossibilities." With such men nothing is impossible. Mountains are scaled by them as though they were mole-hills, or they are pushed bodily aside. Men said again and again that Theodore Roosevelt could do anything. And it is a fact that his powers were so many and so varied that little men always were jealous of him. One of the New York newspapers that differed with him in politics said that no one could understand how he did so much; that he achieved the impossible; he fairly worked miracles. That is what the text means. A man who has real faith can remove mountains. He can do anything at all. A man who has real faith has at his command a power greater than there is anywhere else in the world.

Certainly that seemed to be the case with the early Christian believers. Primitive Christianity was a religion of power. It was not so much a matter of form as much religion is to-day, though early Christianity had its forms and ceremonies. It was not simply a system of doctrine, though it held to certain truths which it insisted upon as stoutly as any creed-maker. But it was preëminently a thing of power. It did things. The people were so astonished at what it did that they said, "We never saw it on this fashion." It could change loathsome disease into health. It could shake open prison doors. It could change the character of men. It could set whole communities in such turmoil that men declared that the world was turned upside down. If there had been newspapers in those days every morning's leader would have told of what the Christians were doing. They were charged with being sensationalists. They were the subjects of gossip and scandal. The police were called out to suppress them. Some of them were executed as common criminals. And yet they went on

with their work. And before a generation had passed they had carried the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

And we ought not to be satisfied unless the Church is constantly achieving results that are pleasing to Jesus Christ, and impressive to the world. There have been a great many times when the Church has been so full of faith that the world was forced to notice her. It was so at Pentecost when the Church was started. It was so in the Protestant Reformation when Martin Luther preached the doctrine of Justification by Faith in such loud, clear tones that we can hear him still four hundred years after his death. It was so at the time of the Methodist Revival when the Wesleys turned England and America upside down. It was so in the Great Awakening of Jonathan Edwards' day, when men shook with terror at the enormity of their sins. It was so in the days when Charles G. Finney went up and down the land, and men were often convicted of their sins as soon as he arose to preach, and before he had uttered a word. It was so in the great revival that swept over the land in 1857 and 1858, when there were hardly churches enough to accommodate the people who wished to hear the Gospel. It was so in 1876 when Dwight L. Moody put himself unreservedly into God's hands, and God used him to usher tens of thousands into the kingdom of heaven.

It would seem as though these demonstrations of power ought not to be unusual things, but ought to be the normal experiences of the Church. The Church cannot live on recollections of those days of power any more than you can live on last year's bread, or can quench your thirst with the water you drank a year ago. The outside world very quickly discovers whether we have had an experience of God's power of our own, or whether

we are simply telling them over again the experiences of some distant past. If the people of the world do not find in the Church a power to redeem men, and make the bad over into the good, such as the Church once had; if they do not find in the people of the Church something extra in the way of purity and patience and kindness, and real goodness, something beyond the ordinary in zeal for the right, and faith in God and all those fine enthusiasms that make life worth while, then we need not wonder if they do not darken our church doors and if they close their hearts against our Lord. If we have nothing to give them but what they already have, we need not expect them to accept our invitations. Men have a right to expect more from the Church than from the world. The Church, like her Lord, is supernatural. We have a right to expect signs and wonders from her. She claims to have with her the almighty God, and if she has, her people ought to show greater devotion to her than worldly people show to the organizations with which they are in membership. If they show no rare devotion to her worship and her work the world is right when it ignores her high profession.

Just as surely as we are the Lord's people this ideal of mighty faith, and fiery devotion, and impressive achievement, is the ideal we have for our own church. The one thing that the members of a church long for more than anything else is that God shall be so manifestly with them that people who come into their services of worship shall say, "This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven," and that the people shall go home after the worship saying with reverential gratitude, "We have seen strange things today." If we can have such evidence of God's presence with us, we need have no concern for anything else.

That is vastly better than any amount of money, for no money can buy the power of the Holy Ghost. It is vastly better than a costly house of worship, for of what use is the most magnificent temple built for the glory of God, if God never shows forth His glory in it? I should a great deal rather preach in a barn to a people who have God with them than in a gorgeous temple and have no sign of God's presence. I should ten thousand times rather preach with no roof over my head and have God work miracles of grace through my faith than to preach in a cathedral and have no mighty work done. The Church's business is to be everlastingly manifesting the power of God in effecting the salvation of men.

Would to God that none could hint that the Church's power is now declining. Its Lord's power has not declined and He is ever ready to impart power to men or women who exercise faith in Him. I am not unmindful of all the good things the Church has done and all the splendid truths she stands for. If you could go through the lands of the Orient as I have, and see the hideousness of the worship in some temples, and the barrenness of the worship in other temples, and the filthiness of the inscriptions on others still, any place of Christian worship would seem so lovely to you that you could fall down on your knees and kiss the stones of which it was built. But any one who loves Jesus Christ must wish His Church to be always at her best, and we cannot be satisfied to have the past days more splendid than the present. We feel that things are not right unless Christ's Church is always achieving results that arrest attention, and we hear men saying, "We never saw it on this fashion."

Would to God that Christ's people would forget all other things for the sake of this one great thing. Would

that they would hold all other things subordinate to this. Would that they would talk of nothing else except how we may demonstrate to an unbelieving world that faith in Christ is still mighty. There is practically no limit to what a few determined people can do. Really it is true, that if you have faith nothing is impossible to you. A dozen men banded together in Christ's name could make their church a mighty church, and such a place of salvation as would lead men there to find a Saviour. A few young men banded together redeemed England socially, politically and religiously, and saved her from a bloody revolution into which, for lack of such young men, France plunged. A few young men so banded together, praying under the shelter of a haystack at Williamstown, Mass., started the modern missionary movement in America. The young men of any church could do such a thing as that if they gave themselves to it in faith. The young women of any church could do it. A little company of Christian people who would not be daunted could redeem any community. Would to God the people in our churches would do it! Would that Christ's people would show themselves people of faith, and the Church demonstrate anew its power, and the people of the world be redeemed!

Printed in the United States of America

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01016 3709